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# Time Well Spent:

A practical guide to active citizenship and volunteering in prison

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The Prison Reform Trust aims to create a just, humane and effective penal system. We do this by inquiring into the workings of the system; informing prisoners, staff and the wider public; and by influencing parliament, government, and officials towards reform.

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This report was written by Kimmett Edgar, Jessica Jacobson and Kathy Biggar

The Prison Reform Trust is grateful to the Violet and Milo Cripps Charitable Trust for its kind support.

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First published in 2011 by Prison Reform Trust

ISBN: 0 946209 89 8

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# Time Well Spent:

## A practical guide to active citizenship and volunteering in prison

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# Foreword

## Erwin James

It is a fallacy that people in prison are content to wallow in a state of irresponsibility whilst lounging around wasting time just waiting for the day when the gates are opened so they can stroll back out into their feckless, crime-sullied lives. This is the caricature of the prisoner as promoted by the popular press, a Fletcher-like *lag*, as depicted almost forty years ago in the television series *Porridge*, who ducks and dives on the prison landing, avoiding any form of social responsibility and whose only stated purpose as far as anyone can see is to get one over on the authorities and cock a snook at the tax payer. Without doubt there is a powerful element of truth that runs through the stories of the anachronistic Fletcher and his chums as they run their wily rings around the hapless prison officers and prison governors of fictional Slade prison – and there is an element of truth in the idea that some people in prison have no intention of changing. For the latter crime may indeed be a lifestyle choice – but a bigger truth is that now, as then, the prison experience for the prisoner in the main consists of enforced idleness and an obligation to conform to behaviour which primarily is aimed at maintaining the smooth operation of the institution. In short, prisons conspire to create model prisoners rather than model citizens.

The joy of reading this report for me is to hear the rarely heard voices of the imprisoned, speaking for themselves about what it is they really want to achieve from their prison sentence. Whoever said, “I want to be out there, helping people,” could have been speaking for many of the people I met whilst serving my own twenty years of prison time. Contrary to another widespread misunderstanding, many of

those in prison do feel guilt and shame for their criminal actions and are as embarrassed at having been subjected to the criminal justice process as any ordinary person would be. Just as many yearn for the chance to try to put things right. Though I would never assume the role of spokesman for people in prison, as a writer born from prison wings and landings I feel obliged to speak up when so many outside attitudes and policies relating to prisons and prisoners are formed under a mist of ignorance and misinformation. My experience of prison was that, amongst the mixture of chaos and control and the corrosive prison culture, there were indeed pockets of opportunity from which to gain a sense of positive engagement with others, inside and outside. But the fact was, and remains, that the opportunities to “do good” – to be helpful and to try to make some amends for harm and distress caused were far fewer than the people who had the desire to show that they were better than they were when they first walked through the prison gates.

Probably the best experience I had in prison of being an active citizen despite my imprisonment was when I joined the Braille Unit in my first long term high security prison. With guidance and training from the two dedicated prison officers who ran the unit and assistance from fellow prisoners already in there I learned every aspect of how to transcribe the written and printed word into Braille. It was the first time in my life that I experienced the satisfaction that can be gained from helping others. The Unit was a happy place to work. The officers, who unlike so many of their colleagues loved their jobs – treated the prisoners, all of whom were serving life for murder, like regular employees first and prisoners second. It was an attitude that brought out the best in the twelve of us who worked



there. The prison held more than 700 of the most serious offenders in the country, including around four hundred who had been convicted of murder. But the only official opportunity for any of us to put something back into the outside community that we had harmed so badly, were those twelve places in the Braille Unit.

Things have changed a great deal since then. Now many prisons have Braille Units, many have workshops refurbishing old bicycles or wheelchairs for developing countries. Others have workshops manufacturing items for disabled people in this country. Every week in prisons all over the country groups of people with learning disabilities are welcomed into prison gyms and education departments to work with prisoners to their mutual betterment. For those in prison who want to help fellow prisoners there are The Listeners, prisoners trained by Samaritans to provide a sympathetic ear to neighbours in distress. There is the Toe by Toe programme where more able prisoners teach less able colleagues to read and write and in all prisons there are schemes and programmes where prisoners and staff are working together to provide some service, social enterprise, or item that benefits people in the outside community. But in spite of all the efforts of all those people, there is still not enough recognition that more people in prison than might be imagined want to engage positively with their communities, inside and out.

A prison governor once said to me, “as a society we believe in rehabilitation for prisoners, but we are not quite sure how rehabilitated we want them to be.” This absurd idea was his way of justifying prison as a negative entity. In fact rehabilitation, the change from taker to giver, harm causer to contributor, is a noble aspiration for criminal justice – because though it may indeed bring benefit to the wrongdoer in the short term – in the long term it will make communities and neighbourhoods safer places to live.

Prison, quite rightly, is meant to separate from society those who cause serious harm and distress to others. But since the vast majority of prisoners will one day be released, an equally important function of imprisonment is to ensure with as much rigour as possible that once they are released they are able and motivated to take a positively active role in society. Part of that should be to provide more widespread opportunities for those so inclined to demonstrate their desire to do good. As the evidence in this report shows unequivocally, “You can meet good people in a bad place,” (male prisoner) and, “We help each other. You’d be amazed – we’re the scum of the earth, but there are people here I’d trust with my life” (female prisoner).

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Brian James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Brian" is written in a more compact, cursive script, while the surname "James" is written in a larger, more open cursive script. The signature is positioned at the bottom left of the page.

# Summary

*Prisons should not allow offenders to simply mark their time in a purposeless fashion. Rather, prisons should be seen as places where increasing numbers of prisoners are engaged in challenging and meaningful work.*

*(Breaking the Cycle, Ministry of Justice, 2010a)*

There is a huge scope for prisoners to take on responsibility, engage in constructive work, and contribute to the life of the prison community. We describe these roles as active citizenship. Examples include volunteering, peer support, charity work, and prisoner representative duties. We define active citizenship as follows:

Prisoners are active citizens when they exercise responsibility by making positive contributions to prison life or the wider community.

## Main findings

There are five types of active citizenship roles in prisons:

- Peer support schemes, whereby prisoners help and support their fellow-prisoners
- Community support schemes involving work with or on behalf of people outside the prison
- Restorative justice programmes, whereby prisoners are encouraged to acknowledge the harm they have caused and to make amends

- Democratic participation in prison life, for example involving membership of prisoner councils or other forums
- Arts and media projects such as prison-based radio-stations or newspapers, or performing arts programmes.

This report is based on evidence derived from a survey of prisons and interviews with prisoners and staff involved in active citizenship schemes. It documents the imaginative and effective work that has been pioneered in some prisons. Most prisons, from young offender institutions to high security prisons, provide opportunities for prisoners to be active citizens. Prison staff have demonstrated their expertise in managing risk by developing an array of roles and activities for prisoners that bring out the best in them.

*The involvement of prisoners in active citizenship and the system's willingness to embrace that is unrecognizably greater than it was 10 years ago, and on a different planet to what it was 20 years ago, when active citizenship rarely extended beyond being a tea boy.*  
*(Prison Governor)*

However, overall, volunteering opportunities are open to very few people in prison. As Breaking the Cycle acknowledges, too often, prisoners are passive recipients. Things are done to them, rather than with them. Active citizenship schemes allow prisoners to play a very different kind of role - to be active in making amends, rather than being managed as passive recipients of services:

*I've always been take, take, take, but I've never given anything back ... It will make me feel a hundred times better than I do now ... if I can give something back instead of take.*

*I want to give something back. Most people in here feel guilty for what they've done. That's something we often talk about back on the wing. Helping other prisoners is a way of helping out.*

Taking responsibility enables prisoners to contribute in a variety of ways to the prisons in which they live. Peer support by prisoners can help to free up the time of prison officers who would otherwise be required to do at least some of this themselves. Prisoner participation in regimes is also welcomed by many who work within prisons as a potential means of improving services and thus creating a calmer and more stable environment.

The implementation of active citizenship also carries risks. In giving responsibility to prisoners, establishments must strike a careful balance between trusting prisoners and maintaining safety and security. However, managing risk is a well-developed skill within prison services, and the evidence from the survey and interviews suggests that active citizenship is promoted safely and securely.

Many of the benefits derived from volunteering could not be gained in other ways. As active citizens, people in prison can perform useful roles and, through this, find that their time in prison has meaning; they can also gain skills which should help to equip them for life after release. Working as an active citizen is challenging and rewarding – in an environment in which there tend to be very few such opportunities.

*It helps you for the outside world, if you are given responsibility. They give you responsibility in here. No one is giving up on you. Some of us, no one has given them responsibility before.*

Active citizenship schemes have a positive impact on the sense of self of prisoners, and on how others view them. This study found that, through volunteering, prisoners experience:

- a purpose to their time in prison
- a chance to acquire new skills
- earning the trust of others
- an increased capacity for responsibility
- a chance to give something back
- a route from passive recipient to a contributor to society.

Each of these benefits has the potential to encourage desistance, a transformed self-image marked by a personal commitment to turn away from crime. Although few respondents explicitly made a connection between active citizenship and reduced re-offending, many indicated that they wanted – and believed they now had the capacity – to change themselves and their lives for the better. Active citizenship can encourage desistance by developing the person's caring, other-centred side, building up their self-confidence and sense of independence, and focussing their thoughts on the future. These activities can also develop the prisoner's social capital; their ability to work with others and to seek support, skills that will help them after release.

*Most of my life I've been doing bad things – like selling drugs and doing things like that; getting praise for the wrong things. This is doing something that helps the community, not hinders it. That doesn't compensate, but I can make myself more valuable to society in the future.*



Wider society gains from active citizenship schemes which help prisoners to engage more with the people and the world around them, to reintegrate in the community once they leave custody, and to desist from offending. For this reason, active citizenship is consistent with the government's 'rehabilitation revolution'.

Further expansion of active citizenship in prisons will require strong support and leadership from senior managers and policy-makers who recognise its value – particularly at a time of far-reaching public sector funding cuts. But in a difficult economic climate, the ideals of active citizenship may have a growing appeal.

Relative to other kinds of criminal justice interventions, a great deal of active citizenship work can be established and carried out with little additional investment of resources. Spending constraints may serve to promote innovation in work within prisons, and active citizenship enables establishments to make full use of a vast and valuable resource which is otherwise largely wasted: namely, the prisoners themselves.

*Prisons should not be about turning offenders into good prisoners, but about turning prisoners into good citizens.*

*(Director of Offender Management)*

## Main recommendations

On the basis of this study the Prison Reform Trust recommends that:

- Government should acknowledge the contribution that volunteering and active citizenship can play in rehabilitation, developing work in prison and the wider concept of the 'Big Society'.
- The Prison Service should produce and implement quality standards for active citizenship, encouraging prisons to expand on the opportunities available.
- Prisons should do more to involve officers in the development of volunteering and active citizenship.
- Prisons should identify policies which inhibit the exercise of responsibility by prisoners, and revise the policies as required.



## PART ONE



### PRISONERS AT WORK:

The impact of volunteering opportunities on people in prison and on their environment



# 1. Introduction

The Ministry of Justice green paper, *Breaking the Cycle*, stated its aims for transforming prisons:

*To deliver our ambition for prisons to become places of hard work and meaningful activity, we will: ensure that more prisoners are subject to a structured and disciplined environment where they are expected to work a full working week; use the expertise and innovation of the private, voluntary and community sectors to help develop the working prison . . .*

(Ministry of Justice, 2010a)

The proposed changes are intended to contribute to a rehabilitation revolution. The Prison Reform Trust's applied research has uncovered evidence of a more gradual evolution in prison management which has the potential to provide a solid foundation for the government's plans to improve prison regimes and increase their effectiveness; namely, the growth of active citizenship.

The Prison Reform Trust aims to promote the humane treatment of prisoners, opportunities for the development of personal responsibility, and support as they prepare for resettlement. In 2002, the Prison Reform Trust produced a report, *Barred Citizens*, on the opportunities within prisons for prisoners to exercise responsibility. In 2005, we followed up this report with *Having Their Say*, which highlighted the expansion of prison councils and the role they play in shaping prison regimes.

We have now re-visited active citizenship and volunteering in a project, supported by the Violet and Milo Cripps Charitable Trust, to check on progress in implementing active citizenship since the 2002 survey. Fieldwork comprised a survey of all establishments and visits to 12 of them to

see, first-hand, how prison staff enabled prisoners to exercise responsibility. The survey suggested that these prisons were particularly pro-active in promoting opportunities for prisoners to be active citizens. On the visits, prisoners and staff were asked about how these opportunities for active citizenship were being exercised, and their impact on everyone involved.

This report explores the full range of volunteering and active citizenship roles in prison. It brings together the main conclusions of the study and makes practical recommendations for the further expansion of active citizenship in prisons. It highlights the benefits of volunteering, for prisons, for the prisoners themselves, and for wider society.

## What is active citizenship in prisons?

The term 'active citizenship' usually refers to the knowledge, understanding and exercise of rights and responsibilities within a community. According to the Institute for Citizenship, the concept of active citizenship covers "three mutually dependent themes: political literacy; social and moral responsibility; and community involvement".<sup>1</sup>

In this report, we apply the concept of active citizenship to prisons by defining it as follows:

*Prisoners are active citizens when they exercise responsibility by making positive contributions to prison life or the wider community.*

The definition has two main elements: the exercise of responsibility and making a positive contribution. Responsibility includes accountability, in the sense that a prisoner might use the opportunity as a

means of making amends for his or her offence. But responsibility also means having the autonomy to make decisions, and working with others under the condition of mutual respect: important lessons in the context of rehabilitation and resettlement.

Making a positive contribution recalls the long-established view that prisoners should take part in charitable work. However, there are many more ways in which people in prison can make positive contributions, for example, by helping and supporting other prisoners and non-prisoners; through democratic participation in prison life by prisoner forums; or engaging in arts or media projects within or extending beyond the prison. What is unique about active citizenship is that the capacity to make a positive contribution is directly linked to the exercise of personal responsibility (see also Burnett and Maruna, 2006).

Becoming a responsible person while in prison is problematic. By definition, imprisonment deprives people of liberty; and in so doing, prisons often also deprive them of opportunities to take responsibility for themselves and for others. However, denial of responsibility does not necessarily follow from denial of liberty, as has been robustly argued by former prison governor Stephen Pryor. He points out that while some might believe that prisons should not treat prisoners as responsible people on the grounds that “the Courts would not have put them away if they were responsible,” such a view is in fact “to misunderstand the purpose of a prison sentence”. Pryor argues that prisons should avoid “taking away more responsibility than is necessary to keep people in custody” and, indeed, that:

*if the [Prison] Service is to do all that it can to protect the public while it holds the person as a prisoner, then it has to do more than simply incapacitate. It should require responsible behaviour of the prisoner.*

(Pryor, 2001)

Along with positive contributions and responsibility, another important aspect is volunteering. *Breaking the Cycle* states the government’s commitment to expand volunteering in the criminal justice system, but it does not acknowledge the extent to which serving prisoners are already making a contribution to society by the work they undertake as volunteers. As will be made clear below, most of the active citizenship opportunities in prison take the form of voluntary work.

Volunteering has particular significance in a prison setting where the prevailing values tend to be materialistic and egocentric. When so much that prisoners do is controlled, through sentence planning, or as a condition of release, volunteering brings the unique benefit of knowing that the person’s efforts arise from genuine motivations and commitment, rather than the sense that they are jumping through hoops to gain early release. More broadly, involvement in volunteering contributes to a sense of social inclusion and citizenship:

*Volunteering can help address the decline of civil, political and social rights of citizenship that is symptomatic of much social exclusion*

(Inst. of Volunteering Research and Volunteering England, 2007: 19).<sup>2</sup>

## **Background**

Typically, people in prison have few opportunities to undertake rewarding work or get involved in other kinds of purposeful activity. A report on rehabilitation by the Select Committee on Home Affairs found:

*Disturbingly high proportions of prisoners are engaged in little or no purposeful activity. Very few prisons provide for adequate amounts of purposeful activity across all, or even most, or the main categories of such activity. . . The consequences for prisoners are too many hours ‘banged up’ up in their cells, with an adverse impact on their mental and physical health, and missed opportunities for rehabilitation.*

(Select Committee on Home Affairs, 2005)



Spending hours in a cell, with a television on in the background, is a recipe for boredom, personal stagnation, and wasted resources. Most work available to prisoners tends to be menial and demands minimal levels of commitment or effort<sup>3</sup>. At its worst, prison inculcates “a passive, monotonous and infantile helplessness” (Maruna, 2007).

The prison environment can institutionalise people, leading them to mistrust themselves and depend on decisions made by others. As a Social Exclusion Unit report observed:

*Prisons have highly institutionalised regimes and one of the biggest problems faced by prisoners on release is that the process of depriving them of their liberty has often also deprived them of any positive form of responsibility and control over their lives.*

(SEU, 2002)

In recent years, however, many prisons have introduced far-reaching and innovative initiatives which allow people to exercise personal responsibility and make contributions of various kinds to the prison and the wider community. Most, but not all, of these schemes involve input from voluntary organisations.

Reasons for the expansion of active citizenship are complex and varied. The inspiration from Stephen Pryor’s pioneering report, *The Responsible Prisoner*, was one of many factors. Another factor is undoubtedly the Prison Service’s decency agenda, launched in 2002. The decency agenda is meant to cross-cut all aspects of work within prisons, and has seven main themes, which reinforce and are reinforced by prisoners’ positive contributions and taking responsibility:

- prisoners should not be punished outside of prison rules

- promised standards within the prison are delivered
- facilities should be clean and properly equipped
- there should be prompt attention to proper concerns
- prisoners should be protected from harm
- prisoners’ time should be actively filled
- prisoners should be fairly and consistently treated by staff.

While recent years have seen a number of constructive developments within the prison service, including the emergence of the decency agenda, the continuing growth of the prison population and associated overcrowding has imposed limits on what can be done. The prison service and other organisations working within it face far-reaching efficiency savings. These cuts will inevitably make it difficult for prisons and voluntary agencies to sustain initiatives that are not seen as core prison business, and will make the development of new interventions harder still.

Nevertheless, the current situation may also present opportunities. The principles of active citizenship may attract growing interest at a time when the greatest possible use must be made of all available resources. People in prison who are willing and able to take responsibility and to make positive contributions are an immensely valuable resource for prisons. Spending constraints may promote innovation in work within prisons. Encouraging prisoners to be active citizens is not necessarily a costly undertaking, especially relative to the potential benefits it produces.

The *Breaking the Cycle* consultation, launched by Government in December 2010, focuses on work in prisons as a central plank of the rehabilitation revolution. In October, 2010, Kenneth

Clarke, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, stated:

*I think that it would be very publicly acceptable if there were a more work-based regime in more of our prisons. I am not sure what specific tests would need to be devised, but we would need to ensure that, whenever possible, the hours spent in productive employment by prisoners reintroduced to the work habit were similar to those to which they would have to adapt if they obtained a job when they left prison, and that they would be able to produce goods, for instance, generating earnings that would help them to make a contribution to compensation for victims.*

(Hansard, 2010)

Active citizenship is consistent with a work regime, in that the hours spent in the roles are working hours, time during which the prisoners are exercising responsibility, being accountable for their time, and engaged in productive activity.

Active citizenship and volunteering by prisoners also promotes the economy of regard, which David Halpern describes as,

*a world of friendship, care, and gift-based exchanges over which conventional economics has little to say but that for most people is what makes life worth living.*

(Halpern, 2010).

Economic growth is measured by the production of paid workers. The economy of regard refers to informal exchanges based on personal relationships; and the ways people help each other, share resources, and demonstrate consideration and respect. This economy is motivated, not by immediate financial reward, but by each person's regard for the other. Halpern argues that these relationships contribute

hugely to the hidden wealth of society. The economy of regard has a greater capacity than conventional economics to deliver double benefits. Both the peer supporter and the person being helped are better off as a result. This clear advantage is particularly relevant when financial resources are scarce. Moreover, the benefits go far beyond an exchange of goods. Halpern shows that the economy of regard makes a huge contribution to general well-being. The evidence from this study demonstrates that prisoners who get involved in active citizenship experience it as participation in the economy of regard.

### **Structure of the report**

This report comprises five sections. In Part One, following this introduction, section two describes the range of active citizenship schemes in prisons, and considers the implications of these schemes for the prisons which host them and the wider society. Section three explores the views of prisoners interviewed for this study: what they thought about their involvement in active citizenship schemes of various kinds and their impact on them. Section four focuses on desistance, exploring the links between the effects of active citizenship on the prisoners' self-image and the motivation to stay away from crime.

Part Two constitutes a practical guide to facilitate volunteering and active citizenship in prison. Based on the experiences of prison managers and staff, the sections cover: how to set up a scheme, the role of the voluntary sector, engaging uniformed staff, managing risks, encouraging participation, and measuring outcomes and equality of access. The conclusion highlights some of the key issues to emerge from the research, and proposes changes to ensure the further expansion of opportunities to promote citizenship.

## 2. The scope of active citizenship in prisons

Active citizenship takes many forms across prisons in England and Wales. This section considers the types and extent, and possible impact, of these schemes.

### ***Types of active citizenship in prisons***

On the basis of the findings of the Prison Reform Trust survey of all prisons and research visits to 12 of them, we have devised a five-fold classification of active citizenship schemes:

- peer support schemes
- community work schemes
- restorative justice programmes
- democratic participation in prison life
- arts and media projects

Some of the schemes provide opportunities for paid work by prisoners; more often, the active citizenship work is undertaken on an entirely voluntary basis. An outline of each of the five broad types of activity, in turn, is provided below.

### ***Peer support schemes***

Peer support encompasses a wide range of roles or schemes by which people offer direct practical help and support to other prisoners, either in a paid or voluntary capacity.

Perhaps the best-known form of peer support in prison is the Listeners scheme. Listeners are prisoners trained and supported by Samaritans to offer a confidential listening service to fellow-prisoners who are feeling distressed. Listeners are volunteers who work on a shift-basis; prisoners can call on a Listener at any time, day or night. The service was launched in 1991 in HMP Swansea. Today, almost all prisons in England and Wales have a Listeners scheme (the extent of this

and other volunteering opportunities in prisons is presented below).

Prisoner peer support workers provide very practical assistance, for example with housing, finance and employment matters, or with negotiating the prison regime. For example, the St Giles Trust runs the Peer Advice Project, which offers training and a recognised qualification to prisoners who deliver housing advice in a number of prisons in London and the south-east of England<sup>4</sup>. The Toe by Toe Reading Plan, run by the Shannon Trust, features peer mentors who support prisoners in learning to read. Translation is another area in which prisoners provide significant help to each other. Many prisons employ prisoners as ‘Insiders’ to provide information and assurance to new arrivals. Peer support is also an integral element of many substance misuse programmes in prisons, as graduates mentor prisoners entering the programme. Violence reduction representatives in some prisons provide advice and support to fellow-prisoners at risk of intimidation and exploitation.

### ***Community support schemes***

Prisoners helping the community outside is perhaps the oldest form of active citizenship. Prisoners have a long tradition of raising funds for charity. However, it could be argued that, in themselves, fund-raising activities do not necessarily entail prisoners taking responsibility. Schemes where prisoners provide direct help to members of the community are more relevant to this report because they involve a greater element of responsibility.

When prisoners are employed (either paid or unpaid) in charity workshops which manufacture or repair goods for local charities, they have greater opportunities

to take on responsibilities. Moreover, when they are enabled to proceed at their own pace, as in the bicycle repair shop at HMP Gloucester, the supervision allows them to grow gradually into assuming greater levels of responsibility.

Opportunities to help the local community which require direct contact call for a high level of personal responsibility. For example, some projects bring members of the community (such as groups or elderly people or people with physical or learning disabilities) into the prison to use prison facilities, like the gym, under the supervision of trained prisoners.

Depending on their security categorisation and stage of sentence, prisoners may be granted release on temporary licence (ROTL) in order to work unpaid in the community. This unpaid work can take many forms, including caring roles with members of the public, for example at day centres for the elderly. One innovative project, piloted by an open prison, HMP Springhill, and the Oxford Citizens' Advice Bureau, deploys trained prisoners to answer telephone queries from the public to the Bureau.<sup>5</sup> Since the original pilot, the Citizens Advice service has increased its involvement in several other prisons.

### ***Restorative justice***

Restorative justice is a response to offending whereby offenders are encouraged to acknowledge fully the harm they have caused and to make amends for this harm – whether directly to the victims of their offences, or more generally to society. Not all active citizenship work by prisoners is restorative, if it does not involve the victim, even indirectly, or if the good that is done is not seen as making amends.

This study gathered evidence about prison-based programmes which are more explicitly restorative. These include the Forgiveness Project, the Sycamore Tree

(active in 34 prisons), and SORI – Supporting Offenders through Restoration Inside (which is active in seven).

In HMP Cardiff, SORI runs victim awareness courses, offers direct victim offender mediation, and delivers youth mentoring. The victim awareness course is run by trainers from the chaplaincy and mentors, prisoners who have previously completed the course. Victims of crime from the local community also participate, and their stories encourage the prisoner participants to think about the effects of their behaviour on others. Towards the end, each prisoner makes a public statement in which they take responsibility for their offence and commit themselves to specific tasks as a means of making amends. Within the prison, the programme is linked to the chaplaincy, the psychology department, education, uniformed officers, and probation staff, among others. It is also integrated into the local community, primarily through Victim Support South Wales<sup>6</sup>.

SORI's work with young offenders, run by the Cardiff Youth Offending Service and the prison, brings young offenders from the community into the prison for mentoring by prisoners who have themselves completed SORI.

### ***Democratic participation in prison life***

The involvement of prisoners in decision-making about the prison regime echoes broader conceptions of citizenship as the exercise of democratic rights within a political community. Its potential importance was highlighted back in 1991 by the Woolf Report, which asserted that:

*[Prisoners] should be able to contribute to and be informed of the way things are run. This is a matter of common sense as well as of*



*justice. If prisoners have a greater understanding of what is happening to them in prison and why, they are less likely to be aggrieved and become disaffected. This should, in turn, improve relations between staff and prisoners.*

(Woolf and Tumim, 1991)

Democratic participation in prison life generally entails prisoner representation on councils and committees which inform the provision of services and the development of strategies and policies. Prisoners typically represent others on their wing or certain groups of prisoners (such as those from minority ethnic backgrounds) or have a particular remit (such as combating violence within the establishment). Many prisons facilitate some degree of prisoner representation, whether through consultative councils or forums essentially run by and for prisoners, or having prisoner members of staff-based committees. However, the extent of prisoners' genuine input into decision-making varies.

A less common form of democratic participation is the engagement of prisoners as assessors in prison evaluations; for example, a small number of prisoners took on this role in HMP Pentonville as part of that establishment's performance improvement planning process, and were involved in the interviewing of staff and senior managers (HMPS, 2008).

The Prison Reform Trust promoted prisoner councils in a 2004 report (Prison Reform Trust, 2004). At that time, only about one in six prisons had a prisoner council. Since then, prisoner representative roles have expanded substantially. There are now trained race/diversity representatives in virtually every prison.

The methods of consulting prisoners have also been further developed. User Voice<sup>7</sup> is a charity led by former offenders to encourage offenders to have input into services across the criminal justice system.

To see User Voice at work, we attended the prison council elections in HMP Maidstone. The newly elected chair stated:

*This is our prison. We've got to make it a better prison. . . . With the introduction of User Voice, my party and myself, the Diversity and Equality Party, decided to be part of the solution, instead of being part of the problem. . .*

*We are here to mobilise, so that both sex offender and foreign national can work together. We are all the same. We want people to wake up in the morning and lift their head up and go to their place of work without anybody intimidating them; nobody bullying them. These are things that are important to the Diversity and Equality Party. . . .*

*It is not only us who are feeling it. People outside are feeling it more than us because we got family out there. So for that reason we should use this prison, a place to get our lives back together, so that we can go out there and be better in our society.*

The desire to work with management to improve the prison so that it more effectively rehabilitates people is a common motivation of prisoners who contribute to councils.

### **Arts and media projects**

Prison-based arts and media projects have a relatively long history, and are quite diverse. They enable prisoners to express themselves creatively and to contribute to society – both within and beyond the prison walls – through that creativity.

A few prisons host in-house radio stations which offer opportunities for prisoners to acquire a range of technical skills through radio production courses, and also to develop programme content. At the same time, the stations have a potentially valuable role to play across establishments



in terms of both providing entertainment and disseminating information. The radio station at HMP Brixton, Electric Radio, which is run by the national Prison Radio Association, won two gold awards at the Sony Radio Awards 2009. At HMP Downview, the media unit runs the prison television channel and provides training in media production. Prison newspapers also provide scope for prisoners to develop practical and creative skills, and to develop and communicate their thoughts and ideas.

Pimlico Opera is one of the best-known music and drama projects in prisons. Since 1991 it has put on a musical in a prison each year – the first of which was *Sweeney Todd*, in Wormwood Scrubs - in which prisoners act alongside professionals following an intensive six-week rehearsal period. Members of the public are invited into the prison to watch the performances.

Supporting creativity of a very different kind, the social enterprise project Fine Cell Work teaches needlework to prisoners and helps to sell the products. According to its website, it currently operates in 26 prisons, and 80% of the stitchers are men.<sup>8</sup> Alongside other kinds of needlework courses (including embroidery and needlework), it runs quilting classes in some prisons including Bullingdon and Wandsworth. At Wandsworth, prisoners were commissioned by the Victoria and Albert museum to produce a quilt for its recent quilting exhibition.

### ***Extent of active citizenship in prisons***

This study began with a survey to establish the extent to which active citizenship opportunities are currently available to prisoners. The survey questionnaire was sent to all prisons in England and Wales. Eighty-two prisons responded to the survey, a response rate of 60%.

The survey found that the large majority of prisons provide at least some opportunities for active citizenship. For example, 95% of the prisons which responded to the survey stated that they

have race representatives, and 89% that they have Listeners (see Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1: Most widespread active citizenship work**

Type of active citizenship work	% of prisons
Race representatives	95%
Listeners	89%
Wing representatives	85%
Suicide prevention representatives	72%
Insiders	70%

The survey showed that active citizenship exists across the full range of types of establishment. Table 2.2 shows that, as might be expected, these schemes are generally more common in training prisons, but they also exist, to varying extents, in local prisons, high security prisons and young offender institutions - all of which might be considered less promising environments for these kinds of initiatives. Nevertheless, there remains scope for expansion of schemes in many establishments: for example, prisoner councils exist in only one in four of high secure prisons; and while over half of the prisons for adult men offered prisoners opportunities to work in drug treatment support, this applied to only 14% of women's prisons.

While most prisons provide for some active citizenship work, the proportion of prisoners involved in these activities is small. According to the survey, four roles involved fewer than five prisoners in the majority of prisons responding: housing advisers, employment advisers, violence reduction representatives, and suicide prevention representatives. In contrast, over 15 prisoners were involved in 31% of mentoring programmes, in 23% of Listener schemes, and in 20% of wing representative arrangements. The survey data suggest that although activities are

**Table 2.2: Extent of active citizenship by type of establishment**

Type of activity	Type of establishment				
	Local	Training	High security	Women	YOI
Listeners	100%	96%	80%	100%	46%
Insiders	60%	75%	60%	86%	39%
Peer mentors	27%	79%	40%	57%	46%
Drug support	47%	57%	60%	14%	23%
Housing advice	40%	46%	0%	86%	15%
Peer mediation	40%	32%	20%	29%	39%
Charity work	33%	39%	100%	43%	46%
Restorative justice	13%	18%	40%	29%	23%
Prisoner councils	40%	50%	25%	71%	31%
Race reps	87%	100%	100%	100%	92%

made available in many prisons, opportunities are all too often provided for a tiny fraction of prisoners in each prison.

The survey also found that many active citizenship schemes were run on the basis of collaboration between the prison and the voluntary sector – as shown in Table 2.3.

### ***Effects of active citizenship on prisons and society***

We have defined active citizenship in prisons as involving positive contributions made by prisoners to prison life or the wider community. This section describes the range of benefits that prisoners provide through active citizenship, as representatives on prison committees, offering peer support, helping people from the community, contributing to arts or media projects or participating in restorative programmes.

Peer support initiatives provide the most obvious practical benefits for prisons. Many prison staff interviewed in this study acknowledged that peer support helped to free up the time of prison officers who would otherwise be required to do at least some of this themselves. Many officers also recognise that people in prison can gain from the rapport they can establish with fellow-prisoners. For example, the emotional support offered by prisoners in Listener and similar roles is seen to be critically important in dealing with distress and helping to resolve crisis situations. As a senior officer remarked in a staff focus group for this project: *“Can you imagine doing a night shift without the Listeners?”*

Finally, through their representative function, prisoners as active citizens contribute to the smooth and effective running of a prison. Prisoner participation in regimes is also welcomed by many who

**Table 2.3: Active citizenship schemes with most voluntary sector involvement**

Type of active citizenship work	% of schemes with voluntary sector involvement
Listeners	94%
Housing advice	76%
Alcohol support	70%
Parenting guidance	67%
Employment advice	65%

work within prisons as a means of improving services and creating a calmer and more stable environment.

### **Benefits for the wider society**

*Breaking the Cycle* calls for the transformation of prisons into places of work. A recent report by the Prisons Inspectorate concluded that most prisoners spend most of their time unoccupied<sup>9</sup>. In December, 2010, the Prison Reform Trust reported that at any one time, under one third of the prison population is engaged in work activities (Prison Reform Trust, 2010).

The effects that active citizenship has on prisoners are discussed in depth in the next section. However, the evidence gathered for this study suggests that active citizenship may have a profound, even transformative, impact on people in prisons, leading them to desist from crime. Research on desistance looks at

*how and why ex-offenders come to change their behaviours ... by building an understanding of the human processes and social contexts in and through which desistance occurs.*

(McNeill, 2006; emphasis in the original).

A common theme is that desistance frequently occurs as part of broader and longer-term process of engagement with

mainstream society. This is described as a process of civic reintegration by Uggen, who argues that when an offender develops new roles in relation to work and family, they can grow into a new sense of self as a law-abiding citizen (Uggen *et al.*, 2004). Ros Burnett (2004) argued that desistance almost inevitably involves a change in self-image. She describes the process by which offenders move “*beyond ambivalence and the mere wish to desist to the will to desist and the self-efficacy to choose a satisfying straight way of life*” (Burnett, 2004).<sup>10</sup>

Shadd Maruna explains how offenders’ involvement in voluntary work and other constructive activities can drive the identity change which is required for desistance. Experiences of helping others can promote a sense of achievement and purpose and improved self-esteem:

*Compared to active offenders, successfully reintegrated ex-prisoners are significantly more care-oriented, other-centred and focused on promoting the next generation. Reformed ex-prisoners express a desire for lasting accomplishments or ‘something to show’ for their lives, describe newfound pleasures in creative and productive pursuits, and often have a special commitment to a particular community or social cause (from environmentalism to youth empowerment). In short, they find a reason to live that is inconsistent with continued offending.*

(Maruna, 2007)<sup>11</sup>

Over half of all those released from prison are re-convicted within a year after release, demonstrating that, for the most part,

*prison is undeniably failing to turn lives around or often even to challenge prisoners to consider such a change*

(Centre for Social Justice, 2009).<sup>12</sup>

If, as the evidence suggests, active citizenship in prisons supports desistance, then its beneficial long-term impact reaches far beyond the individual prisoner and the prison to society at large; and wider society could only gain from its expansion.

The evidence gathered for this study is insufficient to prove that active citizenship contributes to desistance. However, many prisoners interviewed as part of this study certainly believed that their experiences of volunteering had transformed their lives and ways of thinking.

Two brief caveats must be added. First, not every experience of active citizenship changes the self-image of every prisoner. A minority of prisoners interviewed did not express the kind of life-changing

appreciation of the opportunities as the majority. Second, although active citizenship might contribute to desistance, what happens in prison is only a start, a foundation for further change that must take place once he or she has left prison. A new sense of self that starts to emerge within the prison walls is likely to be severely challenged outside. Desistance will depend on the individual's capacity to deal with the challenges and to sustain the process of change in a very different environment. The offender, once released, may need both formal and informal networks of help and support in order to develop that capacity.

### 3. The effects of active citizenship on prisoners

Many active citizenship roles enable prisoners to gain practical skills, and sometimes an allied qualification, which may help to equip them for life after release, particularly in terms of job-readiness. Soft skills, such as an ability to organise one's time and the capacity to be understanding and tolerant towards others, emerge through active citizen duties, and may likewise help prisoners prepare for life outside prison. This section summarises the evidence about the impact of active citizenship on the prisoners themselves. The interviews suggested that prisoners valued active citizenship opportunities because they involved:

- time with a purpose
- acquiring skills
- becoming a more responsible person
- being trusted
- a chance to give something back
- a route from passive recipient to a contributor to society.

We will consider each in turn, but for many people in prison, active citizen roles provided a mixture of all six.

#### ***Time with a purpose***

Too often, most of the time spent in prison is idle. Activities that give a sense of purpose in prison are the exception. Against this backdrop, it would be understandable if most prisoners viewed any activity as valuable, even if all it did was get them out of their cells. However, the interviews showed that being useful was a motivation for many to volunteer for active citizenship:

*A lot of people are in prison for silly things, and you can make a phone call for them so they can sort out their mortgage etc. Just keeping me busy, really ... Don't want to be just sat in my cell not doing anything.*

(Peer advisor)

A St Giles peer advisor said that he had been in post for 13 months and that:

*It's weird to say, but this is the longest job I've ever had! .... Before I started the course I was just another prisoner sitting on my arse doing nothing... The job's given me an opportunity and I've grabbed it by the horns.*

For prisoners serving long sentences, it was particularly important to find ways to use the time constructively:

*I've got a long time to do – have done two years, more than four to do. I hope to stick to it. All I know is I'm happy when I'm helping other guys.*

(Listener)

Income is a factor in finding meaningful activities inside. The average rate of pay for prisoners who are employed is about £8 per week. From this, the costs of day-to-day expenses, such as toiletries, phone calls, and tobacco are charged at rates that are the same as, or above, those outside. Time spent as a volunteer might reduce the time a prisoner can give to earning cash for expenses and therefore volunteering was often in competition with paid employment.

The Justice Green Paper proposes that prison should be places of hard work, with regular working hours, and sufficient pay that prisoners contribute to a victims' fund. Further thinking will be needed to determine how to enhance the



opportunities for volunteering in prison, especially if higher prison wages are paid. The evidence presented here suggests that prisons will need to expand on opportunities for active citizenship in efforts to increase the hours of purposeful activity.

It can be difficult to predict what kinds of activities may appeal to individual prisoners. To some extent, finding meaning in a prison sentence was personal: each individual interpreted the significance of their activities in his or her own way. Activities such as supporting religious duties or helping other prisoners at the gym are examples of activities that have specific appeal for some prisoners, but not others. Men interviewed for this study in a vulnerable prisoners' unit were enthusiastic about their quilting, under the direction of charity Fine Cell Work:

*I find the piecing together of the fabrics immensely satisfying.*

*It's hard in here. But with this, you can make it a positive experience. When you have to be banged up – if, say, they're short staffed and you have to be in your cell all afternoon – it's quite a positive thing to do.*

*Quilting is very Zen. It calms you down. You can be in your cell working, you look up and four hours are gone.*

Some prisoners implied that they had access to activities that were more interesting and challenging than any they have experienced outside prison. This irony was not lost on some, including one woman who was undertaking a 20-week course on all aspects of media production:

*My sister says she thinks I'm lucky. I know what she means. I would have given anything to do this outside, but I wouldn't have been able to afford it. But she understands that it's different when I go back onto the wing.*

Another respondent, talking about the youth mentoring in which he was involved, commented:

*I'm mindful that I'm in prison and we've got all this great stuff going on, but ... we're pushing the boundaries. I don't think personally there's any more I can do.*

The common factor, the aspect that made their time meaningful, was the chance to do something positive. Helping other people, or making some other kind of contribution to the immediate or wider world around them helped them to come to terms with their own problems and difficulties. Across the wide diversity of activities, those who participated in active citizenship felt that they were performing useful roles and that, through it, they had found a purpose to their time in prison.

### **Acquiring skills**

One new skill which prisoners in the interviews linked to active citizenship was empathy. A Listener explained in his interview that he was serving a very long sentence. He said that with so many years still to serve in custody, he was not thinking about what life might hold for him after release. And yet he commented that working as a Listener had helped him to put his own problems in perspective, to the extent that they had just faded away, because he now understood that other people's problems were so much bigger than his own. Being a Listener, he said, had enabled him *"to give something back to those not as fortunate as myself"*.

A few of the roles require the prisoner to mix with people from the outside community. Learning to appreciate other people's needs was a by-product of active citizenship roles. For example, in HMP Sheppey, prisoners worked in the gym with people from outside who used the facilities.

*We get to interact with outside people who come in to use the pool, and this will help us become better people. We learn how to interact. It makes me feel a better person, because I'm actually helping people who are less well off or not as capable as myself.*

(Gym tutor, working with members of the community who have disabilities)

*It puts things in perspective when you see there are people worse off than you.*

(Drug peer support worker)

*Being in prison, you think your situation's bad, but it's not half as bad as some of these people – at least I'm getting out of prison; these people are disabled for life.*

(Volunteer in community day centre for people with disabilities)

A life sentence prisoner worked as an Insider in the reception area of the prison. His role was to offer information and support to newly arrived prisoners. Recently, he said, he had met a 21-year-old man who had come into prison for the first time, and was extremely anxious. He asked the young man how long he was in for. The young man replied, “Ten days – what about you?” The Insider said: “I’ve done about 6,000 days!” and they then had a bit of a laugh about it. He explained that because he is nearly 40, he can be a kind of father figure to youngsters like this one who come into the prison.

A few prisoners drew a direct link between opportunities for active citizenship and resettlement:

*[It is] getting me used to a work environment, and an office environment.*

(Peer advisor)

Many volunteering roles are highly challenging. A peer support worker talked about finding it difficult to mentor sex offenders, and commented that “This job is

*never easy. You hear things you never wanted to know. But you just grit your teeth.”*

Listeners are often required to respond to fellow-prisoners in states of extreme anxiety and distress, in which the possibility of self-harm or suicide is never far away. One Listener spoke of having to care for people who are contemplating suicide, perhaps having entered prison for the first time, and feeling that “the world is collapsing in on them”. He explained that the role “can burn you out – some of it’s very, very difficult to hear”.

Another Listener said that it is possible to spend four hours with someone, dissuading him from self-harming, only to find out the next day that he did go on to harm himself in the end. Yet another said that after working on the care suite for three or four nights (where prisoners considered at risk of self-harm may be placed), “your mind just goes...” Clearly, some forms of active citizenship place extremely high demands on prisoners.

### ***Becoming more responsible***

Active citizenship requires prisoners to demonstrate personal responsibility: in how they relate to others, in taking initiative, and being accountable for tasks. One outcome is that prisoners develop skills of working as a team member. Active citizenship brings with it a normalised working environment, with mutual expectations and workers who must depend on each other.

*It’s good to be part of a team.*

(Insider)

*One of the valuable things – when it’s your project, you’re in charge. So you learn about the different roles, but also about yourself. You can’t make a film on your own.*

(Media House worker)

Working with others also meant that the person felt treated like a normal human being. Wing representatives, race equality reps and prison council members had positions which required them to interact with the prisoners whose interests they represented in new and challenging ways.

*It has allowed me to mix with people from other wings. It gives me a working relationship with people. You put trust into your working relationships. You help people and they help you. You gain knowledge and can pass it on. There's 14 of us [in the bicycle workshop] and we work closely together. Sometimes there are arguments, but that is part of working together.*

(Charity worker)

Linked to the high level of responsibilities prisoners took on, many prisoners stated that they valued the support they received to meet the challenges of their work. The Listeners who were interviewed stressed that they depended on ongoing help from Samaritans, who hold regular support meetings in prisons, and provide opportunities for Listeners to offload after difficult contacts.

Prisons are efficient at making people accountable in the limited sense of punishing them for misconduct. Prisons are not as good at fostering an environment in which people connect outcomes and consequences with their decisions and behaviour. Active citizenship promotes this broader sense of accountability, in which someone takes responsibility for a role and is rewarded when they fulfil expectations.

*Most people in prison don't want responsibility, because they are stuck in a frame of mind that says they've been stuck here. They need another prisoner to show them how to take responsibility. Then they start to see the possibility that things can change for them.*

(Peer mentor)

Being responsible was, for some, an experience they had never had in prison before.

*It helps you for the outside world, if you are given responsibility. They give you responsibility in here. No one is giving up on you. Some of us, no one has given them responsibility before.*

(Violence reduction representative)

## **Being trusted**

*I came here from living on my own, independent, self-employed. It was a shock to not be trusted with a pencil sharpener. Being trusted gives you your self-respect back.*

(Peer mentor)

Being trusted by the prison and by fellow-prisoners is an intrinsic part of active citizenship, especially for those who take on peer support or mentoring roles. The Listener role is one in which trust is crucial, as it involves dealing with peers at their most vulnerable, and demands that issues raised are treated in full confidence.<sup>13</sup>

Being trusted is tangible evidence of change in how others view you. In allowing prisoners to exercise responsibility, prisons necessarily place a degree of trust in these individuals. (In Part Two of this report, we will discuss the implications of managing risk in active citizenship.) Here, we note the positive impact of this trust on the prisoners themselves:

*It shows you are a trusted person. It's not something they will just chuck at you.... As a rep you're dealing with people's issues about drugs and drink, so you have to be a strong person.*

(Drugs peer worker/representative)

The dynamics of trust in a prison environment are complex. It is inevitable that in a coercive, authoritarian setting like that of a prison, being trusted by staff may jeopardise trust from fellow-inmates, and vice versa. The contested nature of trust

emerged in the following exchange among several peer mentors in an open prison, whom we asked about attitudes of other prisoners towards them:

*It's more difficult for young offenders and juveniles. In YOIs, if a top lad spoke to them, it shows the others, that it's ok. You train the top lads to be mentors.*

*It's a question of maturity. Everyone in a YOI is immature. Mentors would just be seen as grasses.*

*It's about trust. When I was in closed conditions, I didn't trust no one. In my mind, I wouldn't speak to anyone.*

*[Peer mentoring] would be harder in a bang-up jail. There, you can cut the tension with a knife. If you are talking to an officer, you're down as a grass. But they need it more in those jails.*

Prisoners who do gain the trust of staff and their fellow prisoners can find that this enables them to open up in ways that would otherwise remain hidden:

*This is my second time in. First time, I was angry and aggressive. I didn't care. I felt like I was allergic to people. It wasn't a nice me. This opportunity turned it round for me. I could even hug someone now. I've changed a lot and being a rep has made me compose myself differently, speak differently, not be angry.*

(Diversity representative)

*It's you opening yourself up, showing your vulnerabilities.*

(Restorative Justice participant)

Experiences of being trusted and receiving approval convey a sense of belonging, an attitude shift that could clearly support released prisoners through resettlement.

## **A chance to make amends**

*I've always been take, take, take but I've never given anything back ... It will make me feel a hundred times better than I do now ... if I can give something back instead of take.*

(SORI programme participant)

Prisoners' comments about opportunities to give something back took two forms. One was a desire to express gratitude for help they received; the second was to make up for the harm they have done.

Many Listeners explained that they took on the role after benefiting from the scheme when they first arrived. For them, the chance to do something positive for others was a way of expressing gratitude for the support they had received when they felt low.

*Because I've been on the other side of the fence. I couldn't get any lower than I was, and I got an awful lot of support from staff and inmates alike. I just received so much support to get through my low part, and it's nice to do the same for others.*

(Listener)

*When I came in, I found it really difficult. I think it was shock. It was so difficult for me. When I came here, I took on the role of Listener. I realised if I had known about this, and used Listeners, it would have been easier for me. Although my freedom has been taken away, I can give something back and help someone who is really desperate.*

(Listener)

Others who said they had been depressed when they arrived, found different outlets for their desire to repay the prison for the help.

*When I first came in, I was suicidal. I did not want to do something useless. I wanted to give something*



*back, because the prison had helped me. They didn't judge me; they supported me. The bicycle shop enables me to give something back.*

(Charity worker)

*If you've got an individual who's struggling, and you help them, you've given something back. That's my drug. It is so rewarding!*

(Outside worker)

Some prisoners recognised that their offending had created an obligation to put things right. Their descriptions of active citizenship showed that they were grateful that the prison provided a means for them to make amends for what they had done.

*I want to give something back. Most people in here feel guilty for what they've done. That's something we often talk about back on the wing. Helping other prisoners is a way of helping out.*

(Violence Reduction Representative)

The understanding that one's behaviour had harmed other people applied more widely than to victims. One young man spoke of the impact of his sentence on his family and the benefits of his quilting:

*For some people, it's a way of making an apology to their family. The sale of my last quilt will give my parents the money to travel to visit me. I know I've helped them out.*

(Quilter with Fine Cell Work)

A discussion group was held with men in SORI's programme who mentor boys on the fringes of the criminal justice system. (This mentoring work was conducted within the required safeguarding structure.) All of the men were serving life or indeterminate sentences. One described the impact of working with a young offender, and his hope that he had helped the young man to avoid making the same mistakes as him:

*The guy I had – he was shy, and then over the days I brought him out of his shell. I asked him what he wanted to do. He didn't really know to start with. I gave him some direction – get back to school, stay out of trouble, get a career path. I felt I'd built a bond with this kid. When it was finished, I was pretty much gutted because I wouldn't be seeing him again ... [It was] a chance to give something back to these kids. I wish I'd had this programme when I was their age.*

(SORI participant)

For some, the chance to make amends was so different from any of their previous experience that they saw it as a life-changing event. A participant in the SORI programme in HMP Hewell was asked to say which part he thought was the best.

*Talking to the victims. I expected them to be angry, but they were nice. They said how they felt at the time. I've been stabbed myself, but I'm a criminal. But I told them I want to change and they accepted that. I want to put something back. I want to help someone not make the same mistake I did.*

(SORI participant)

### ***Turning prisoners from a drain on society to net contributors***

Shadd Maruna's research with reformed ex-offenders found that those who were most likely to reintegrate successfully were "significantly more care-oriented [and] other centred" (Maruna, 2007). Maruna



believes that offenders come to that orientation gradually, through a personal experience of helping others. Over time, their self image undergoes a transformation. Having adopted a self image as a needy consumer of society's benefits, they begin to feel that they are (potentially at least) a productive contributor to their communities.

A race equality rep interviewed for this study commented:

*Most of my life I've been doing bad things – like selling drugs and doing things like that; getting praise for the wrong things. This is doing something that helps the community, not hinders it. That doesn't compensate, but I can make myself more valuable to society in the future.*

(Race Equality Rep)

A participant in restorative justice stated:

*The prisons should be using the prisoners for this kind of thing – we're untapped resources.*

(SORI participant)

This process of feeling confident in one's potential is complicated in prison environments, when the prevailing values are self-centred and materialistic. Thus, a prisoner said that he had taken on a role as a peer support worker because he felt it would improve his chances of getting parole. Once he started working with prisoners in need of advice, however, he gained a different perspective. He explained that he saw the role as . . .

*a chance to turn my life around, an opportunity to prove myself – that I am a respectable person.*

(Peer supporter)

Learning to appreciate the personal benefits of giving something to others seems to work best when the activity is

seen as rewarding; the process can be impeded when the activity is defined as a punishment. Here again, the ethos of prisons creates challenges for encouraging people to contribute to the common good. However, the experience of being able to help others provided some prisoners with tangible evidence that they could make a positive difference.

*When you see you've helped someone, you see a light switch on, it makes you feel better about yourself seeing you've helped someone.*

(Peer supporter)

*It is a good feeling when you see guys who you have helped through. There's a sense of pride, something I've never had in the past.*

(Mentor)

*My outlook changed, working for Fine Cell Work. I was money-focused outside. But now I am working for another charity, and all the money I make there goes to a hospice. That money enables them to have a volunteer. The pride I get about what that's done for them – that's a great feeling.*

(Fine Cell Work participant)

Prisoners engaged in a wide range of activities felt that they had been able to make a positive difference. Logically, contributing to the common good can take innumerable forms, and therefore virtually any type of active citizenship can encourage offenders to see themselves in a more positive light. The next section discusses the impact of active citizenship on the participants' self-images, and on how their work changed how others saw them.

*If someone has gone through life with no responsibilities, they've got low self-esteem. Just giving them self-worth can alter their whole way of life.*

(Peer mentor)

## 4. Evidence in support of desistance

This section considers the impact of active citizenship in prisons on efforts to reduce the risk of re-offending. Although the sample size and methods rule out the possibility of linking these activities directly to the re-offending rates of those interviewed, the interviews gathered the prisoners' perspectives on how the programmes had affected them; and these data can be used to indicate how active citizenship might contribute to promoting desistance.

Desistance theories about reducing re-offending draw on and develop offenders' positive attributes and strengths. A released prisoner who emerges with skills and confidence may be less likely to reoffend than one who is sent out feeling insecure and fearful. This study did not set out to establish links between active citizenship and desistance. The links emerged through the interviews with prisoners, who stressed that active citizenship had boosted their confidence, revealed their strengths and abilities, and given them a new sense of self-worth.

### **Seeing oneself differently**

Desistance theory builds on tipping points in the person's self-image. When they were asked to consider how active citizenship had influenced them, many participants described a personal transformation:

*I was arrogant, pig-headed, violent, stubborn ... [Since becoming a Listener] I've learnt to talk to people, reason with people ... and you look at things from a different perspective... You get more of an understanding, I suppose.*

(Listener)

*It's made me less selfish. Showed me the joys of giving. It's done a lot for my confidence. Also helped me cement my relations with staff. It's done tremendous amounts, really it has. Given me a few grey hairs as well!*

(Peer support worker and Toe-by-Toe tutor)

*Just taking the role is showing you are willing to change straightaway. Putting our heart into what we do is already changing us.*

(Drug peer support worker)

Some respondents felt that they had gained a sense of humanity and decency from their involvement as active citizens:

*Helped me realise that I am still a worthy person.*

(Assistant in arts classes)

*It's different afterwards ... You're just not the same guy. You've made that effort to give back something.*

(SORI participant)

*It opens a part of your mind up where ... you look at life differently. Opens your mind up a lot. Makes you stop and think about the consequences. You realise that you can be better than what you was.*

(Listener)

### **Being seen differently by others**

The prisoners interviewed for this study were also aware of changes in the way others saw them. For example, several said that being an active citizen meant that one was seen as a human being and not just a prisoner. Fellow prisoners were among those who could see the individual in a different light:

*Some [prisoners] are surprised to learn I'm a prisoner as well. Then they say, 'How can you help me?' But when you're in this job, you're free of being a prisoner.*

(Peer mentor)

Some prison officers – particularly those who were well-disposed towards these schemes – were able to see a different side to the individual:

*It's nice to think that staff will look at you differently, treat you more like an equal.*

(Insider)

Prisoners praised the staff they encountered from voluntary organisations for appreciating the humanity of the prisoners they worked with:

*They see us as people ... [who] have made mistakes ... See me not just as an inmate ... but as someone who's helping them to do their job ... As prisoners we've had a lot of judging. Last thing we need is more judging.*

(Peer advisor)

It was particularly significant for many respondents that they received thanks and appreciation for what they were doing, signs of the positive attitudes of other people towards them:

*I have appreciation for the first time in my life.*

(Peer advisor)

*You get letters of thanks from the people who buy your quilts outside.*

(Quilter with Fine Cell Work)

*[I've had people who are at the prison on visits, saying] thank you for helping my husband, or my son – and that's remarkable. That's lovely, really.... It's a nice feeling to be doing something for other people. Like a complete stranger interrupting my visit to say thank you – that's not really the done thing in prison!*

(Insider and alcohol peer support worker)

Those whose work involved contact with the general public commented on how they could change people's negative ideas about offenders:

*It shows the community that people can be reformed and want to help. They read so much in the papers about how bad we are. At L—, I was talking to a woman while she was having lunch. She asked me about myself and I told her I was a lifer.*

(Voluntary worker in the community)

*Once they see us and know what we're like, their ideas [about prisoners] change.*

(Health trainer, working with disabled members of the public who use the prison swimming pool.)

Making a connection with members of the public and, particularly, victims of crime is a key element of many restorative justice programmes, including the SORI programme, discussed in previous sections. Part of SORI's victim awareness course is a public statement by the offender, in front of members of the public including crime victims, in which he takes responsibility for the harm caused by his criminal activity. Several of our respondents spoke vividly about their experiences of these sessions:

*It stirs up a lot of emotion. ... It's really emotional. Really draining. But very rewarding at the same time. I felt great after it.*

*It's the hardest thing .... [But] you feel elated afterwards, like a weight's come off your shoulders.*

SORI staff interviewed for this study gave their perspective on the significance of the encounters between participants and members of the general public. They said that these sessions are unfailingly very powerful because there emerges a sense of the shared humanity of everyone who is there – which touches even those members of the public who approach the occasions with deep scepticism. The result, one of the project staff said, is that

members of the public who approach the occasions with deep scepticism. The result, one of the project staff said, is that *“some sort of transformation takes place”*, the exact nature of which is *“difficult to rationalise”*.

The potential power and value of bringing prisoners and members of the public together, in a positive context, also arose in interviews with the Pimlico Opera Company. We interviewed a senior member of staff of the organisation and an ex-prisoner who, while still in prison, had been in one of the company’s prison-based productions. Both described the pleasure and pride people in prison gain from performing in these productions to audiences largely made up of members of the public. The staff member told us that the impact on prisoners of taking part in these performances is extraordinary. In particular, they always talk afterwards about the applause (*“They say: ‘Oh my God, the applause!’”*), and how much it means to them to have had recognition and respect – sometimes for the first time in their lives – for what they have achieved.

### **Self-expression**

A Listener talked passionately about how he had learnt to express his feelings, and how important this was – and that he was a better person because of it. But, he said, expressing oneself, allowing oneself to break down, is something that is extremely difficult to do in prison: this is a place where *“you’ve got to wear a mask”*. Young offenders typically come into the prison *“emotionless ... like a brick wall”*.

The notion of having to wear a mask while in prison, and learning how to take it off, also emerged in comments from the respondent who had performed in a musical while in custody. He said that for him, the most significant and valuable aspect of being in the musical was his experience of building relationships with the other prisoners he performed with. When they first came together for rehearsals, he explained, they had been cautious with one another; but over time

they began *“opening little channels between us”*, as they learnt to be ever more open with each other, and even express their vulnerabilities. Although they were *“in a place where we had to have all these masks”*, all of them, in the end, got to the point where they had a sense of mutual trust:

*You could see the changes happen to the lads ... Testing how normal we could be with each other .... Doing any of the kind of things people do in everyday life, but you have to keep tucked away in prison... We was giving each other hugs when someone did something well - the kind of thing that wouldn't happen on the landings!*

They felt an emotion towards each other, he said, that was *“totally honest, wholesome”*, and of a kind that some of them, perhaps, had never had before. But it had grown through their recognition that *“we’d created something through our hard work together”*.

Another respondent, a violence reduction representative, talked in much starker terms about the development of positive relationships in an unpromising environment. He said, *“you can meet good people in a bad place.”*

Personal change is complex, gradual, and often fragile. The timing of the opportunity to give something back has to correspond with the person’s readiness to change. It is not clear what needs to happen to ensure that a more positive self-image can be maintained over time in prisons. Nonetheless, our interviews with prisoners who had experienced active citizenship consistently showed that these opportunities enabled them to make a positive impact. There are clear implications of these experiences for successful resettlement.



### **Thoughts on resettlement**

Although few respondents explicitly referred to the risk of reoffending, many believed that the opportunities to take responsibility and make a positive contribution would help them upon release. For example, prisoners drew direct links between the opportunities to exercise responsibility inside and dealing with the demands they would face on release from prison:

*I've become stronger as a person; more independent. It's something I can use not to end up back here.*

(Violence Reduction Rep)

*It's given me confidence in my ability to work.*

(Peer advisor)

A few prisoners drew more practical links between active citizenship and resettlement. A youth mentor in SORI said that he hoped to get involved in mentoring work once he was in open conditions:

*Responsibility – I thrived on it. Makes you feel better about yourself – you're not just standing still ... And you have the power to help people ... I feel proud of myself for being part of that ... I feel like I've got a vocation.*

A few participants were explicit about their intentions to desist. A Listener said that having learnt to “*stay focussed and be responsible for what you do*,” he was less likely to re-offend in future. A peer support worker commented that his experiences were “*definitely going to help me stay out of committing offences*”. Another peer supporter had a clear idea about the implications of his current experiences for his offending:

*If I knew [that I could do this kind of work] before, I wouldn't be here today.*

The prisoners' praise for active citizenship roles highlights a potential pitfall. Prisoners who have achieved much while inside may develop unrealistic ambitions about how they might take their active citizenship work further upon release. Released prisoners typically face many and varied difficulties as they seek to resettle into their communities, however motivated they are to make that resettlement process a success. The duty to disclose a criminal record, under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, may mean that prisoners who wanted to take up caring or welfare roles after release may face particular hurdles.<sup>14</sup> Regardless of what kinds of safeguarding arrangements are ultimately put in place, they are likely to have a significant impact on former prisoners with an interest in – paid or voluntary – social welfare work. If such ambitions are thwarted, this could have damaging repercussions for their self-confidence and thus their prospects for resettlement.

Even if they achieve a great deal in the prison setting, this can be only the start of a very long and arduous process if they are to make new lives for themselves on leaving prison. Nevertheless, the evidence presented in this report shows that opportunities to take responsibility in prison can prepare people for release so that they will be ready to face the demands that go with citizenship outside.

Meaningful activities seemed to shift prisoners' thinking about resettlement. A SORI participant spoke about his future life beyond the prison gates:

*It makes you feel like you've got a purpose. A lot of us, we're doing a long time – and you get caught up in the day to day things. But now I can see myself outside. I can visualise myself outside now.*

(SORI participant)

Although the sample size was small, it was noticeable that so many prisoners spoke with confidence and enthusiasm about their future work and career prospects. Some spoke in largely practical terms about the skills and/or qualifications they had acquired through the active citizenship schemes which they believed would help them to get work. Others talked more broadly about having found a new sense of direction and purpose in their lives and wanting, for example, to train as counsellors or give talks to children and young people about the consequences of crime. For example:

*I want to be out there helping people.*  
(Race equality representative)

*After facing a lot of prisoners, I feel I could face anything.*  
(Peer advice worker)

## PART TWO



The Wandsworth quilt, commissioned by the VotA, is the work of many hands

It has given us the opportunity to discover our creativity

This work not only gave us great pride but also purpose while we are serving our time

We used our surroundings and feelings to come up with the ideas for the patches that go to make up the quilt

The stitching has kept us busy and has given us confidence, friendship and a sense of achievement

Because people supported us, we have supported others



## ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP: A Guide to Making It Work

## Introduction to Part Two

*Prisoners are huge assets. Don't just look at their needs; consider what they can do, what they can give. People who are outside the economic market can still be enormously valuable to their community.*

(Prison Governor, interviewed as part of the Prison Reform Trust's active citizens project)

This, the second half of this report focuses on how to develop active citizenship and volunteering schemes. We will explore the steps that prisons can take to expand the opportunities for prisoners to undertake responsibilities as active citizens. This guide covers:

- setting up schemes
- partnership with voluntary sector organisations
- gaining the support of staff
- risk management
- working with prisoners
- outcomes, monitoring, equality of access.



## 5. Setting up

Prison managers, staff, and workers from the voluntary sector reflected on how they had set up their schemes. Through the survey and interviews, they provided practical advice about how to make active citizenship and volunteering opportunities more widely available. Careful preparation, while setting up schemes, pays dividends in the quality of outcomes the scheme will produce.

Principles for setting up a successful active citizenship scheme include:

- Ensure the scheme has the full support of the governor
- Give plenty of time to set up (six months before the first prisoner participant is not unreasonable, depending on the nature of the activity)
- Involve discipline staff in planning
- Consult prisoners about how you intend the scheme to work
- Build in a team approach, drawing on the particular expertise of different departments and different sectors
- Establish protocols for communication, especially on the sharing of information and the limits of confidentiality
- Assign responsibility for making it work to someone who believes in the scheme
- Track outcomes, as these will be vital to demonstrate the scheme's effectiveness
- Assess the scheme for equality impact, and monitor recruitment to ensure equality of access
- Design schemes to fit in with the strengths and needs of your population

- Start with numbers you can easily manage (at least initially)
- Encourage voluntary sector involvement, but voluntary sector partners should not be expected to depart from their organisational objectives in order to work with prisoners
- Set milestones for the prison to achieve, stating who is accountable for what
- Anticipate the ways the scheme will challenge the prison culture and offset these through awareness-raising, team-building, and publicising the achievements of the scheme
- Ensure sustainability through a structure that can survive changes of personnel
- Link the scheme into the core functions of the prison and Senior Management Team accountability and reporting lines
- Allow the scheme flexibility to enable it to change in response to evidence about what works best.

### Allow sufficient time to set up

Most opportunities for prisoners to be active citizens entail:

- A manager or staff member holding responsibility
- A team-work approach, perhaps involving partners from the voluntary sector
- Systems for recruiting, training and managing prisoners
- Security considerations.

Clearly, building the structure for these requires some lead-in time. As the Head of Offender Management at HMP Gloucester explained, commenting on the Fair Shares project:

*Some things take a lot more time, just because it is a prison. At our first presentation to NOMS, a governor was singing the praises of Fair Shares. Then he said, 'Colleagues, Fair Shares is a voluntary organisation, so they can't work as quickly as we do.' But I find that the boot is on the other foot. Security creates bureaucracy. It takes time.*

### Build wide support

Building widespread support for the scheme is an important first step (we discuss ways to do this in the next section). The Residential Governor at HMP Downview explained:

*An important part of establishing good programmes is getting everyone on board. Having an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach is vital. Everyone is on board with it and wants it to work. When we meet an obstacle, we dismantle it through a joint approach.*

This last point explains why it is so efficient to involve partners from the start: the diversity of skills and expertise of an integrated team help to resolve problems that arise as the scheme develops.

In a similar vein, the peer mentoring scheme at HMYOI Thorn Cross gained the full support of the governor. At his suggestion, the scheme devised a role for prison officers:

*When we first set up the peer mentors, we already had an Insiders scheme, but it was not pro-active. I said to the Governor that I would like to follow the Childline model*

*with something more pro-active. He agreed. You need the Governor's support. He said that he wanted uniformed staff trained. That's another thing: you need to involve discipline staff. We trained them in pro-active advice and support.*

The Prison Radio Association, working with HMP Brixton, built a relationship with all the departments in the prison, so they all knew what the radio was designed to achieve. As a result, the radio found that departments came to them when the department had something they wanted to publicise in the prison.

### Integrate the scheme within the whole regime

The promotion of active citizenship depends on getting the culture right, so that the core functions support the opportunities to exercise responsibility and make a contribution. The then Deputy Governor at HMP Bullingdon commented:

*Opportunities are there for people to take. You can't force people to take them up, but you can create an environment in which they see the benefits of progressing inside the prison and then outside.*

At a focus group of senior managers at HMP Grendon, one governor stated:

*You need to ensure that the structures to support active citizenship are maintained, supported, and active. The prison has to make explicit the deliverables: what structures of active citizenship they expect to offer, what it will achieve and how far they have gone in achieving that.*

This also makes clear that support for the scheme can be gained by publicising its success. (We discuss this aspect below, under monitoring outcomes.)

## Begin on a manageable scale

*'You want some control, you've got to keep it small'<sup>15</sup>*

From a practical point of view, it makes sense to start a project with a small number of participants. This might mean, initially, that the activity is targeted at prisoners considered most reliable, and broadened to more challenging offenders only after gaining sufficient experience. The Head of Offender Management, HMP Gloucester, said of the bicycle repair shop:

*If another prison wants to set this up, we suggest they start small. Our workshop, for 14 prisoners, has taken seven years.*

Starting with a small group also means that the scheme can be tailored specifically to suit the capabilities of the prisoners who participate.

## Design schemes that meet the needs of your prison

Setting up activities which enable prisoners to grow in responsibility inspires creative thinking about the sort of roles that can be made available. The survey found that prisons facilitate an enormous range of such roles. Many of these are described in Part One of this report. For illustration, here is a list of some of the activities which are currently run by prisons (all direct quotes from the survey):

### Drug misuse support/ healthcare -

*Substance Treatment and Offending Programme {STOP} currently retain and pay a prisoner who has completed the full 15 week course as a programme mentor for the next course.*

*Health trainers linked to healthcare improving general health and wellbeing and catering across the*

*prison - this includes health checks for prisoners by prisoners.*

### Representatives –

*Disability Prisoner Wing Representatives who work with the Community Cohesion & Equality Team regarding issues raised by prisoners with Disabilities.*

*The reps on councils and committees report issues and advise of concerns.*

*Gay Prisoner Forum in place - raised awareness at establishment level support for gay offenders' development.*

### Literacy/education -

*Prisoners are trained to use DRAGON software to help to train others who cannot read or write.*

*Peer Mentoring Group undertakes Level 2/3 qualification and supports other students in a variety of situations e.g. one-to-one help with literacy and supporting students in vocational areas.*

*As our range of vocational training expands, we intend to allocate a mentor to each area who has already completed the qualification.*

### Resettlement support –

*Reception peers (Insiders) are completing the housing form as part of their interviews with all new arrivals. This is done in reception because at this stage there may be a need to do housing benefit*

*applications, or to inform housing benefit of the change in circumstances, etc.*

*Our PSW (Peer Support Worker) work is very advanced including the IAG team (Information, Advice and Guidance) with its core of trained PSWs who advise other prisoners on ETE (Education, Training and Employment), Accommodation and FBD (Finance, Benefit, and Debt) issues.*

*Prisoners wholly developed the 'Road to Resettlement' handbook which identifies areas that people in prison need to think about and address during their sentence to avoid coming back to prison. This is a powerful and empowering tool, as peers recognise that other people, in the same position as themselves, have written it.*

#### **Other –**

*Insiders at Court scheme at Birmingham courts.*

*Operation Veteran allows ex-forces offenders to access specific funding, which is available only to the ex-forces group.*

*We use activity reps to encourage participation in activities from all prisoners in varied activities.*

The huge variety of activities reported to PRT shows that prisons have been creative in assessing what practical help is needed at that prison, and then developing an active citizenship scheme to respond to each specific area.

### **Different approaches for different types of volunteering**

Recruitment provides one illustration of the principle that each opportunity for active citizenship might require a bespoke set of processes and structures. The selection of prisoners as active citizens in media or arts might reasonably be based on skills. Representative roles, on the other hand, depend on an ability to be accessible to many prisoners and to advocate equitably for their interests. Their selection should, where possible, be by a free election. Listeners need to be non-judgmental; their selection will usually be delegated to Samaritans, who approach the task from an expert, external perspective. These differences suggest that active citizenship schemes will be developed in slightly different ways. Some require more input from the voluntary sector than others. Some are based on a single work location; others require prisoners to have more freedom of movement. An arts programme might be short duration, as for example, a group rehearses and then presents a theatrical performance. In contrast, the diversity and race equality action team might meet four times a year and will benefit from continuity in membership, including its diversity reps.

### **Flexibility**

Strengths of the voluntary sector are its ability to respond to prisoners as individuals and to make quick changes in response to shifting requirements. These advantages need to be accommodated by the prison in order to exploit fully the contribution that the voluntary sector can make. One project visited in this study had been set up to enable prisoners to benefit their families. However, when families made it clear that this was not their wish, the project shifted its targets so that the work done by prisoners went into a 'goodwill pot', benefitting different members of the local community.



A 2008 consultation by NOMS with voluntary sector agencies found that they support greater efforts to understand the needs of offenders (NOMS, 2008). The consultation also found that the voluntary sector required clearer information and more consistent communication from prisons about NOMS' policies on commissioning and managing service delivery.

### Prepare for a culture shift

Despite the obvious advantages of active citizenship, some aspects of the schemes challenge the prevailing prison culture. Therefore careful preparation should identify points of potential conflict, and address these through awareness-raising.

Stephen Pryor, a former governor interviewed as part of the study, stated:

*The single most important change of culture is the notion that prisoners should be required to maintain and develop responsibility while under sentence in order to continue as citizens, albeit citizens with reduced rights.*

A provider from the voluntary sector gave a specific example of a very successful active citizenship project which did not dovetail neatly into the prison regime's emphasis on offending behaviour:

*This is all done on a voluntary basis – it's not a formal part of sentencing planning, and reports on the course are not submitted to the parole board.*

Many voluntary sector providers develop their own policies and principles for working with prisons. For example, Samaritans has a guide to working with prisons which provides detailed advice about confidentiality, boundaries, and the mutual expectations between prisons and Samaritans.

### Take steps to ensure sustainability

Many active citizenship schemes require staff time and other resources to start, but far less to keep going once they have become established. When people know how a scheme works, and are convinced of its benefits, they tend to contribute informally to facilitate the scheme. For example, a manager of a peer support project, run by St Giles, commented:

*There were some quite forward-thinking governors. There was some resistance – certain individuals who didn't like the idea. It was a whole new thing, having officers open cell doors to let prisoners talk to others. But generally the prison was quite supportive. Now there are a lot of new officers who have come in and the system has already been in place.*

Stephen Pryor drew attention to the vulnerability of such schemes to changes in personnel or to changes of mind by stakeholders. Many voluntary sector organisations experience short-term management from the prisons in which they work. Service agreements with prisons can be discarded with little exit strategy or negotiation. A change of governor frequently means that their role in the prison is uncertain. The voluntary sector agency is left to start again, either at a new prison, or with the new governor at the current prison.

All of this wastes valuable resources, as the initial investment in setting up, sometimes charitable funding and the hard-won experience of tailoring the scheme to the specific needs of each prison, are lost. For this reason, it makes sense for prison managers to build sustainability into schemes at the planning stage. Projects that promote active citizenship should be protected from being forced to close due to a change of prison managers.

## 6. Partnership with voluntary sector organisations

The NOMS' voluntary sector consultation (2008) revealed a common perception that short-term funding was a problem for the voluntary sector.

*There was also a widespread 'plea' for the continuation of some grant funding, especially to support community, specialist and emerging services and to encourage the development of currently less well understood social enterprises. Closely related were comments from charitable funders who often 'pump-prime' new and innovative services, but feel there is little opportunity for the most effective schemes to then be 'mainstreamed'.*

Yet, some voluntary sector respondents also made clear their view that, with a little imagination, NOMS and prison governors could resolve the lack of continuity, particularly as many of the obstacles raised by prisons are not financial.

*The contribution of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) towards the regime in prisons and to the pre-release and post-rehabilitation of prisoners is a seriously undervalued and under-utilised national asset<sup>16</sup>.*

The Centre for Social Justice, founded by Iain Duncan-Smith, argued that cultural change was needed in the way that prisons (and NOMS) work with the voluntary and community sector (VCS):

*We recommend a major expansion of the role of VCS groups in the rehabilitation of prisoners. We call for an urgent sea change of attitudes within NOMS . . . so that many more VCS organisations and*

*their trained volunteers are encouraged and commissioned to work with prisoners and ex-prisoners on their rehabilitation into the community.*

(Centre for Social Justice, 2009)

The help and support that prisoners need encompasses a wide range of social dimensions, including mental health, housing, skills, employment, family relations, and faith. Prisons and other criminal justice agencies lack the expertise to meet most of these needs, and would be unable to help even if their funding was massively increased. There is a huge disparity between the capacity of voluntary sector agencies to contribute to prisoners' wellbeing and the level of activity which prisons currently allow. Funding is clearly a problem, particularly now, but even when a voluntary sector organisation can fund its work with prisoners, it can be stymied by obstacles created by the prison. The NOMS consultation cited evidence of a feeling that prisons have been slow to make better use of the resources offered by the voluntary sector:

*A high proportion of respondents expressed frustration at the lack of progress in opening up prison and probation services to a wider supplier base, with a request for clarity on the potential scale and scope of future opportunities.*

(NOMS, 2008)

There are prisons in which the voluntary sector is welcomed – which prove that it is not necessary for prisons to be so inward-looking. Prisons that value and support the input of the voluntary sector demonstrate that facilitating their work brings huge benefits. Responding to the PRT survey, a few prisons wrote in that they held open

days in the prison to draw in more voluntary sector organisations. Another respondent explained:

*The prison has involvement with over 100 voluntary sector organisations who work in the prison, way too many to list. A massive range of services is offered to prisoners.*

Given the huge range of services and approaches within the voluntary sector, it can be a challenge to select the services that are most appropriate, and to co-ordinate their activities with prisoners. Here, too, the voluntary sector has the expertise to simplify the prison's role. In HMP Kennet, Sefton CVS manages the voluntary sector roles, co-ordinating the efforts of a wide range of agencies.

However, it takes time for a prison to provide the voluntary sector with the flexibility they need to perform well. The agency needs to prove that it understands the importance of security; and prison staff need to see the benefits that come from the agency's work with prisoners.

To focus on one example, the Listener programme saves lives. However, in many prisons, establishing the partnership between the prison and Samaritans has been a struggle. Initially, many security departments were suspicious and sometimes obstructive. At one prison, the Samaritan representative explained:

*When I first came in, we struggled. They didn't want us here. They couldn't accept our confidentiality principles. Now they welcome us; they do whatever is reasonable that we ask for.*

As she explained, in time prison staff come to understand and appreciate the role of Samaritans in supporting the Listener programme, and this enables Samaritans to perform their role far more efficiently. For example, in some prisons, Samaritans are members of the safer custody team,

draw keys, and are familiar to both staff and prisoners on the wings.

Partnership with the voluntary sector opens up a range of options for prisons. Opportunities for prisoners to give something back to the community can be more or less direct.

One set of possibilities involves prisoners as workers and links up to the charities that can help with the distribution of refurbished goods

*The Good Again workshop (working in partnership with the charity Second Chance) refurbishes second hand white goods that are then sold in charity shops to families on lower incomes.*

*Onley has a wheelchair shop and a bicycle shop (working in partnership with the charity Recycle) that refurbishes equipment that is then sent to third world countries.*

*Work produced in the Barnardos' workshop is sold in Barnardos' outlets around the country for the benefit of their children's projects.*

Within the voluntary sector, there are agencies that will match the prisoners' efforts with those of other volunteers in the community. Fair Shares, which is perhaps the best-known example, banks the hours prisoners work as volunteers so that the time they work can be claimed by voluntary sector agencies outside.

*Fair Shares' principle is co-production. It's the multiplier effect. Prisoners bring an asset. Anyone, as a human being, is an asset. A second principle is a redefinition of work. ... If we don't develop civic responsibility we cannot operate in society. Fair Shares helps people to grow into it.*

(Head of Offender Management, HMP Gloucester)

The most direct contact between prisoners and members of the community are through Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL), whereby a prisoner can go out into the community and work as a volunteer. Similarly, members of the community can come into prison and receive services directly from prisoners.

*The Dereham Day Care Centre staff bring two mini-bus-loads of people to the prison every Friday and they work in the gym with specially trained prisoners.*

*Partnership work and liaison with Anne Frank Trust UK to build and supply scale models of Anne Frank House Amsterdam. Models used as part of Anne Frank Exhibitions nationally to promote diversity and cultural awareness.*

Here again, the voluntary sector can help by building links to the wider community. Organisations that make use of volunteers can be open to facilitating unpaid work by prisoners on ROTL.

In between are schemes by which the beneficiary is identified and knows that the service is provided by a prisoner, but there is no personal contact. HMYOI Portland set up a system whereby each wing adopts a charity, which the wing then supports. Prisoners working as advisers under the innovative CAB scheme provide a service directly to clients, by telephone, while they are in prison. In the seven years since the first prisoners arrived at Oxford CAB in August 2002, over 50 men have passed through OxCAB helping tens of thousands of clients to the full audited CAB standard without a single prisoner-related complaint.



## 7. Gaining the support of staff

While someone is in prison, serving a sentence, society should be able to benefit directly from work that the prisoner can do. Some prisons are extremely effective in running schemes that enlist the efforts of prisoners in activities that benefit society. In other prisons, staff use their discretion to be ultra-cautious, so that voluntary sector providers are frustrated, links with the outside community are discouraged, and prisoners are labelled untrustworthy. The government's plans to turn prisons into places of work can only succeed if prisons continue to develop, expand on, and sustain active citizenship by prisoners through partnership with the voluntary sector.

Prison officers make a vital contribution to active citizenship. Supporting a peer mentor, advising a race rep, enabling a prisoner to get to a workshop on time, or keeping a Listener informed about a prisoner, are practical steps taken by staff which enable the active citizen to carry out his or her role. Thus, the discussions with managers, officers and voluntary sector staff included ideas about gaining staff support for these schemes.

### **Overcoming resistance**

Among those who responded to our survey, a minority commented that some officers resisted efforts to develop volunteering and active citizenship in prisoners. Asked to list the challenges in implementing active citizenship, one prison cited, “*staff trust in offenders doing this work.*” Another response made clear that not only staff but prisoners themselves were sceptical about prisoners’ capacity to take responsibility:

*Cynicism on the part of staff, prisoners and the community. Breaking down the negative beliefs and expectations that each component group might have of the others.*

A specific area of potential conflict arises about roles prisoners perform which were previously the duty of officers. As one prison responded:

*We need to be aware of industrial relations issues; volunteering cannot replace core roles or shore up core work where budgets have been cut.*

A governor explained:

*A potential difficulty is that the more you use peer workers, the more you take away from the work traditionally done by staff . . . They now have prisoners working in Offender Management in a liaison/communications role. It takes a bit for staff in OM to get used to this, but it works quite well.*

The interviews produced practical suggestions of steps that should be taken to gain the full support of officers. These can be summarised under four themes:

- Raise awareness of the active citizenship scheme
- Demonstrate its benefits
- Enhance the role of officers
- Establish the scheme as part of the regime.

## **Raising awareness**

Prison Service Order 4190 sets out governors' duties in working with the voluntary sector. One that has particular relevance to active citizenship requires governors to involve uniformed staff.

*Governors must:*

*ensure information about services and support offered by the voluntary and community organisations is promoted widely by the prison using notice boards, newsletters, directories of organisations and regular occasions, such as, information fairs where staff and prisoners can meet groups.*

*ensure that the understanding and trust needed for working in partnership is created and that staff understand: why voluntary and community groups have been invited to work in the prison, what they do and how this benefits the prison, themselves as staff, and prisoners.*

Although these actions are specifically addressed to working with the voluntary sector, they highlight the importance of informing staff about how an active citizenship programme works, how it benefits the prison, and what its effects will be on their work as members of staff. Communicating with officers about active citizenship should start in the planning stages, but it should also apply on a continuous basis, as in this example from HMYOI Portland:

*We're good at communication. We ensure there is good communication between departments. If there is an issue in one department, they are quick to feed it up to the governors. We know we depend on staff for these programmes, so we make sure we communicate with them well.*

Along similar lines, Nigel Atkinson, Deputy Governor at HMP Bullingdon stated:

*The fundamental is decency. But you start with the culture. ... A lot comes from the managers being fair to the staff. That lead of fairness has to be reinforced by SMT [Senior Management Team] and all the way down the line. Decency is all-encompassing and includes staff, prisoners, and visitors. You have got to value your staff, respect their individuality and value what they say.*

The voluntary sector organisation should be able to play a part in informing staff about an active citizenship scheme. For example, Samaritans train officers in suicide awareness listening skills. Informing officers about the Listener programme helps to break down any resistance. In particular, officers can struggle to accept the principle that Listeners' practice is confidential. Some officers – and perhaps managers – believe that confidentiality between prisoners will make the prison less safe. However, Samaritans can show that confidentiality enables prisoners to disclose their problems and fears to someone they trust, knowing that they do not have to hold back for fear of how staff will use the information. Being able to vent feelings in this way can reduce tensions, and lead to a safer environment. Confidentiality is central to the way the Listeners scheme works, so they depend on officers to understand the reasoning behind the policy.

## **Demonstrate the benefits of the scheme**

The prison staff and managers interviewed often said that a key to gaining staff support was demonstrating the benefits of the scheme. When officers saw what it could achieve, they were much more likely to help to make it work. Brian Pollett, then CEO of the Isle of Sheppey cluster, focused on how active citizenship improved staff-prisoner relationships.

*Generally, if prisoners can provide services for other prisoners, and the recipients of the services are happier, it makes them easier for staff to deal with. E.g. Listeners solve problems for officers. So it's a win-win situation.*

The St Giles Trust manager of the peer support scheme at HMP Bullingdon, Hughie Solomon, suggested that officers are more likely to give full support to a programme when they can see the benefits for themselves.

*Once officers see it working, they see that it takes a lot of pressure off them. They know they can send prisoners to talk to the peer advisors, so the officers benefit. You can see the confidence grow in the peer advisors.*

*There's very little friction between the officers and the advisors – they work in conjunction. Without the advisors, the job of the officer would be a lot harder. Because one of the big issues for prisoners is the risk of losing their homes, and if they don't want to talk to officers they can get very irate. If St Giles help to secure their housing, they become easier to manage for officers.*

Although officers are likely to support a scheme which helps them do their job, they will also respond positively to schemes when the benefits to others are publicised.

### **Enhancing the role of officers**

Involving officers in the delivery of active citizenship schemes will improve job satisfaction, as encouraging responsibility in prisoners is rewarding in itself. Thus, one prison identified the importance of assigning officers who were right for the job to support roles: motivated, committed to the aims of the scheme, and able to demonstrate a positive attitude towards prisoners, particularly given the likelihood that some prisoners will sometimes fail.

HMP Preston's response to the PRT survey stated that it was a challenge to have "the right staff in place to encourage and motivate the individuals and steer them to achieve".

Officers who believe in the scheme are likely to convince some of their colleagues that they should give it their support. The manager of a peer mentoring scheme stressed that:

*You need good staff on the scheme. We have two assigned officers, and they are both committed to restorative justice and have credibility with the other staff. Staff and SOs [Senior Officers] are more involved in selection [of peer mentors]. We are open to officers' input, and officers can get a mentor suspended.*

A governor at Portland YOI drew a clear link between helping prisoners to take responsibility and increasing the officers' job satisfaction.

*Once you have seen someone who has benefited, you know it works. We regularly receive thank you letters. When staff hear their efforts have been appreciated and that they have helped a prisoner, it makes their job more meaningful.*

### **Establish it as normal**

In addition to steps specifically intended to gain the support of staff, prisons can ensure the sustainability of an active citizenship scheme by establishing it as a part of the regime. When managers, staff and civilian workers come to see the scheme as normal, less effort is required to make it work. A manager of a peer support service said that once the scheme had become established, it was easier to rely on staff for support.

Andrew Wilkie, from Prison Radio Association, described how something as simple as ensuring the prisoners attend the scheme on time is resolved as the programme is mainstreamed:

*Because it's a place of work like the others in the prison, the staff are fine about bringing prisoners there etc – there's no obstruction. For the first few months it was difficult, because staff didn't know who they were; but now the radio station is embedded in the prison, and it works well.*



## 8. Risk management

In running volunteering activities, it is vital that prison staff assess and monitor the risk that a prisoner could abuse a position of responsibility. Any abuse could lead to a decision to close down an active citizenship scheme. Thus, risk management plays a central role in active citizenship. At the same time, an over-emphasis on risk can stifle active citizenship. Security is part of the core business of prisons, while volunteering and active citizenship tends to be viewed as an optional add-on. It is a matter of balance. Volunteering requires good risk management in order to work properly, but disproportionate concern about possible risks stops active citizenship before it can start.

The challenge for prison staff is to facilitate active citizenship schemes and manage risks at the same time. Managers and staff have to be open to innovation to enable the schemes to operate, and they need to guard against overly restrictive safeguards which can stifle the scope for personal development and creativity. They need to find ways of including all prisoners: not just those who are the most obvious candidates in terms of competence or reliability. They must offer prisoners the opportunity to use their initiative and genuinely take responsibility in carrying their roles and activities. All this can only be achieved if active citizenship is supported by staff and management at all levels within the prison, as well as by the prisoners themselves.

Risk management relates to two different contexts. The few prisoners who are eligible for day release must be risk-assessed primarily with reference to their likely conduct outside, among members of the public. For the majority of prisoners, however, risk assessments relate to the environment inside the prison. The risks inside include:

- undermining prisoners' safety by fomenting conflicts
- exploiting a position of trust by gaining illegitimate benefits
- betraying confidence; or failing to pass on information about activities that undermine security
- intimidating or exploiting vulnerable prisoners
- illicit activities made possible by the role, e.g., moving drugs or mobile phones from wing to wing
- facilitating an attempt to escape or abscond.

These behaviours are potentially very damaging to any prison. However, judging opportunities to give prisoners responsibilities solely by these risks would make volunteering impossible. As things stand, the emphasis on risk avoidance profoundly inhibits the practice of active citizenship. As two respondents to the survey stated:

*Everything should be properly risk assessed; any doubts, don't do it.*

*Where there are not sufficient resources to robustly risk assess and monitor, the number of prisoners involved should be limited and matched to resources capability.*

However, in an interview, a governor stated the opposite view:

*The ultimate outcome of risk management is to do nothing. You have to be creative, be willing to give it a go. I think that risk is valuable.*

Constructive risk management builds from the fact that prison staff are very experienced at assessing and managing risks. A prisoner who takes on a low level of responsibility and abuses the trust can swiftly be removed from the programme so that another prisoner can benefit.

But why take a chance?

Most prisoners will spend a short time inside – in a setting where their risks can be carefully managed – before they are released back into society. Thus, to promote the rehabilitation revolution, prisons must place greater emphasis on providing opportunities inside, where the risks can be assessed, monitored, and – to some extent – controlled. The alternative is to continue to practise a risk averse policy, which provides very little chance to exercise responsibility, only to release people who have become more dependent and whose risks cannot be controlled.

Inside the prison, trusting prisoners through active citizenship provides another important benefit. Dynamic security refers to methods of managing the prison that ensure everyone's safety by building good relationships between all staff and prisoners. Dynamic security works by prison staff getting to know prisoners individually. If a prisoner is never placed in a position where they can show the extent to which they can be responsible, if they are never tested, then dynamic security is undermined as it is impossible accurately to measure their risk.

In addition, more responsible prisoners can influence others on the wings to resolve problems early and prevent disorder. As one prison responding to the survey wrote:

*Despite this being a resettlement establishment accommodating prisoners with few control or emotional well-being issues, these do arise and escalation has, on many occasions, been prevented via the timely intervention of trained prisoner reps.*

The idea that, through active citizenship, prisoners can make a profound contribution to good order within the prison is an illustration of the ways that active citizenship challenges the prevailing culture. Alice Fishburn, writing in *The Times*, described a meeting of the prisoner council at HMP Isle of Wight. Their guest was the head of healthcare:

*A council member requests that lists of medications dispensed by the pharmacy be removed from public display. Those at the table grin knowingly as he describes how they offer a 'shopping list' for drug dealers.*

(Fishburn, *The Times*, 2010)

The Prison Reform Trust report, *Having Their Say*, explains how prisoner forums work. The report shows how prisoner councils reduce conflicts and improves relations in the prison.

Balancing risks and trust means, on one hand, granting prisoners responsibility; and on the other hand, maintaining the safety and security of the prison and all the individuals within it. This requires managing risks, rather than avoiding them. Promoting active citizenship, *"is difficult and calls for professionalism from staff"* (Pryor, 2001). As a governor explained:

*Prison college teaches us security, C & R. Giving people responsibility isn't what you are taught. But how to do that is a hard skill.*

Trusting prisoners who have been placed in active citizenship roles can include:

- free movement through the prison
- direct access to a wide range of fellow prisoners
- acquisition of personal information about other prisoners
- authority to represent the interests of other prisoners
- and even open access to telephones/faxes.

A senior officer who supervises a peer support scheme stressed that trust is central to the position. She pointed out that managing the risks for that project involves:

- a full risk assessment by security for every peer support worker
- voluntary drug testing, because a positive test casts doubt on their suitability for the role
- supervision and management of the prisoner's work.

One lesson is that the risk assessment should be graded to match the degree of trust the role requires. For example, if the active citizenship activity includes a high level of staff supervision, it is appropriate that less stringent criteria can be applied than for situations in which the prisoner is expected to work independently. A variety of active citizenship roles will help a prison to match a prisoner to a level of responsibility which can be managed. The HOPIN project in HMP Stafford places a high degree of trust in peer supporters, and accordingly, their security checks are comprehensive:

*They are given such a position of trust – to discuss other prisoners' issues – they have to go through quite a rigorous assessment, which covers six areas of the prison: wing-officer, healthcare, security, probation, OMU [Offender Management Unit] and the workplace.*

A second lesson is that throughout the active citizenship placement, measures can be set up to monitor the prisoners' performance and check for abuses. Decisions about how much responsibility a prisoner can handle are not straightforward, but risk management enables prison staff to be systematic in ensuring that the prisoner can be trusted. The Head of Residence at HMP Downview described their approach:

*We do give women a chance, we stick our necks out. Balancing risks and enabling responsibility is the difficult thing. . . . I remember one woman who was working with me. She heard something in the office and went right back to the wing with it. Now she's off the programme.*

Confidence in risk management enables prisons to extend active citizenship roles to prisoners who may find it hard to comply. The co-ordinator of the peer mentoring project at HMYOI Thorn Cross, Anastacia Selby, explained how good security enabled them to work with more difficult prisoners.

*At first, we selected the best. There was less risk-taking. As we've gone further, we have taken greater risks (at least in terms of their offences). We use it for personal development, developing skills. When the scheme is working well, we can take more risks. But you need to have a balance. You can't have too many who are a risk.*

For most prisoners, responding responsibly to increasing levels of trust is an incremental process. Their capacity for responsibility must be stretched for them to demonstrate that they can be trusted. For long-term prisoners in particular, the capacity to take on responsibility can rise and fall, so it is important to give them more chances over time. One failure should not be held against them indefinitely. Risks should be subject to regular review.

This points to a tool which prisons employ as part of good risk management, namely, supervising and supporting prisoners in the role. A response to the survey from HMP Highdown's peer support scheme demonstrates how an explicit agreement can combine with support to ensure that the prisoner makes the most of an opportunity to take on responsibilities.

*Limits need to be put in place around confidentiality, expectations, boundaries and the extent of the role. Provision needs to be arranged to support both the peer and the prisoner he is supporting, so that more specialised assistance can be given where needed.*

In HMP Gloucester, the instructor at the bicycle workshop was asked how he responded to disruptive prisoners. His response shows clearly that discretion enables supervisors to distinguish between those who would abuse a position of trust and those who need support to become more responsible:

*If they are disruptive, then they have to go. If they are not interested in doing the work, well then we have a long waiting list. But if they are lacking skills and self-confidence, that's not a problem. We will work with them. One who came along could not hold a spanner. Now he has had a big boost in confidence.*

When the active citizen role requires contact with members of the public, further risks arise. Prisoners' access to telephones raises possibilities of abuse, but again, prisons have built up considerable expertise in dealing with the risks involved.

Open prisons – and resettlement prisons – face a different set of problems, as risk assessment relates primarily to the person's conduct outside the prison. The response from HMP Kirkclevington shows how the duty of public protection influences decisions about releasing a prisoner on licence:

*In this prison there are more opportunities and carrying out community work is the rule rather than the exception. One of our challenges is matching prisoner to placement and having enough suitable placements for prisoners.*

*Extreme care is needed in monitoring both the prisoner and the placement to ensure there is integrity on both sides. The prison must be mindful of public confidence in the criminal justice system.*

Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) involves set procedures for assessing and managing risk, as explained by the response from HMP Drake Hall:

*[ROTL] is determined through the risk assessment process, the outwork board, and the prisoners' OASys [Offender Assessment System]. There may be specific limits on individuals, i.e., where they can work. What is expected of the prisoners is also explained to them, where they have to sign and adhere to the outwork compact and terms and conditions.*

Good risk management of prisoners who have opportunities to work outside can genuinely reduce the chances of things going wrong. A governor described the prison's record:

*We have safe systems of working in the community. In eleven years, we have had one insurance claim against us, and that was for spilled paint. There has never been money stolen, or people threatened.*

Voluntary organisations should be seen as a resource which can help prisons to manage the risks associated with active citizenship, as schemes are often run in partnership between the prison and the voluntary sector. In most circumstances, voluntary sector staff should report any serious concerns about a prisoner's behaviour to the prison.

Here again, a delicate balance is needed. On one hand, voluntary sector staff should know that certain information must be relayed to prison staff: relating to child



protection, a risk of harm to others or to the prisoner, and a clear breach of security, such as plans for escape. On the other hand, prisoners are often more likely to disclose problems to non-statutory agencies, and voluntary sector staff should not be put under pressure to betray confidentiality by informing prison staff of everything they are told (unless the exceptions given above are present).

One conclusion to be drawn from the evidence provided by prison managers, prison officers and outside service providers is that, too often, a risk averse approach has stymied the development of

active citizenship. However, the practitioners also show that the risks can be managed; that the benefits outweigh the effort needed to assess and manage risk; and that prisons can bring their expertise in managing risk to deliver high quality volunteering and active citizenship opportunities to a greater number of prisoners.

## 9. Working with prisoners

The two major tasks for prison staff in working with people in custody are about getting them to take up the opportunities and supporting them in those roles. The first area covers publicising schemes, recruiting and selecting prisoners, informing them about the role, job descriptions, and compacts. The second concerns the quality of supervision and support they receive in carrying out their duties.

### ***Publicising the scheme and recruiting prisoners***

Publicising active citizenship opportunities depends to some extent on the nature of the role. Prisoner council members or race reps might be elected by their peers in a formal process, whereas prisoners working in a charity shop would normally submit an application for the position. In principle, prisons should take care, in publicising schemes and recruiting prisoners, to ensure that the opportunities are equally accessible to all prisoners. (See below, where we discuss matching prisoners' skills and interests to the type of position available).

The need for a range of approaches to recruitment can be illustrated by the contrast between Samaritans and Pimlico Opera. The Listener scheme is advertised on the wing, and anyone can put in an application to become a Listener. The security department runs a check on all applicants. After clearance is granted, Samaritans conduct an assessment in much the same way as Samaritans are treated outside: they undertake exercises designed to show listening skills, non-judgmental attitudes, and empathy. It is not part of the Samaritans' selection process to ask about the person's offence, as this is not relevant to whether they can be a good Listener.

Pimlico Opera brings professional singers into prisons to perform operas along with prisoners working as performers and stage hands. Their recruitment is based on personal contact with prisoners on the wings. Pimlico Opera staff describe the project to prisoners; explain how it works; and invite prisoners to sign up. In this, as in many other active citizenship projects involving the voluntary sector, direct access to prisoners is essential and is the first step in building trust between the voluntary organisations and individual prisoners.

### ***Matching prisoners to the active citizenship roles***

All prison departments are expected to report any concerns about prisoners' behaviour to the security department. An efficient system of sharing information about potential trouble is vital to the work of the security department, and to the prison as a whole.

The sharing of positive information about prisoners is far less systematic, and in some prisons, non-existent. All staff who work in prisons – on the wings, but also healthcare, workshops, education, and the gym – are well-placed to observe individuals who would be suitable for specific roles: Listeners, race reps, peer mentors, Insiders, or disability reps. Although those running the schemes should usually have the final say as to whether someone is right for the job, they should be able to rely on all prison staff to support them in recruiting candidates. Staff who manage volunteers are used inefficiently, if the full burden of recruitment falls upon them.

The survey found evidence that most active citizenship opportunities were made available to a tiny fraction of the prison

population. Even in the most pro-active prisons, comparatively few prisoners could access volunteering opportunities. Thus, there was a tendency in most prisons to focus on the most reliable, skilled, and articulate prisoners. The response from HMP Risley cited good practice as:

*Prisoners should not volunteer for too many projects and [we should] involve as many as possible.*

New Hall wrote that they try to “ensure the same group are not used for all volunteer positions.”

Samaritans have designed their training so that it is accessible to hard-to-reach prisoners.

*There are Listeners who can't read or write – and Samaritans have to be very careful in delivering their training to be sensitive to that. Some Listeners aren't the most articulate.*

An important advantage of most active citizenship opportunities is that, unlike offending behaviour programmes, they can allow the prisoner to proceed at his or her own pace. The instructor at the bicycle workshop in HMP Gloucester provided a clear example:

*I get a lot of referrals from the Mental Health Inreach Team. We've had a few in here who have been in and out of mental health institutions. They come in timid, shy. But there is no pressure here. I want them to enjoy what they do. It happens regularly that they have never done anything like it. When they complete a bike, their pride is obvious.*

Prisons should draw on the commitment of all staff to active citizenship through systems that make it possible for all staff to contribute information about prisoners' suitability for roles, and by supporting them in undertaking active citizenship.

### **Turnover: a structural problem**

Many prisons cited the turnover of prisoners as a major obstacle for volunteering and active citizenship. It is common for a prisoner to apply for a position, be vetted and prepared, only to be transferred to another establishment. HMP Bronzefield spoke for many prisons in stating, “In a local prison it is often difficult to maintain continuity of provision due to the movement of the women.”

The manager of a peer support worker scheme run by St Giles stated that in 2008, 24 prisoners started the NVQ in advice and guidance. Due to transfers, only seven qualified. When a prisoner knows that she or he is likely to be transferred before their training can be completed, it would be understandable if they have little motivation to take part. The prison radio project at HMP Brixton explained the impact of high turnover:

*We work with 10-11 prisoners at a time. They do a six-week accredited course in radio production, and when they're completed that, some go on to work full-time for the radio station, producing programmes. Up to now, they've had to do the course in order to work there. Because Brixton is a local prison, most prisoners are there for a short time, which is a very significant problem for the radio station. Some other prisons where they have radio stations, like Cardiff, keep prisoners for, say, two years, which means you can really develop their skills. It's quite common at Brixton for prisoners to move on before they've even completed the course, which can be very frustrating, especially for those who are showing particular skills or promise – since they're likely to move to a prison that doesn't have a radio station.*

An additional problem caused by the turnover of prisoners is that it de-stabilises the links between the project and the prison. If a bicycle workshop is set up for ten prisoners, but some of them are transferred every month, recruitment must take up much of the supervisor's time; and – equally important – the beneficiaries of the repaired bicycles cannot know how many bikes they are likely to receive due to fluctuations in the work force. This example applies to other forms of active citizenship: a prisoner council will be undermined if many of its members need to be replaced in between meetings.

The project found a number of methods used by prisons to offset the problems caused by a high turnover of prisoners. For certain roles, the prison can place a hold on the prisoner, ensuring that they can stay for a set time, either to complete a course, or to fulfil an active citizenship role. Prisons have also made adjustments to the schemes to accommodate short-term participation. The instructor at the HMP Gloucester bicycle repair shop explained:

*We started an NVQ in bicycle maintenance. It's a roll-on, roll-off course, designed to allow people who get transferred to pick up the course at their next prison. Three of our 14 started their NVQ this week. And people can stay on the workshop after they get their NVQ.*

Voluntary organisations can provide support that fits into short-term participation. For example, a prison might wish to consider training for its violence reduction reps through the Alternatives to Violence Project, whose introductory courses in managing conflict take three days. Follow-up courses, in more depth, might be accessible at the next prison.

More generally, some opportunities can be adapted to match the time period available: for example, voluntary work for some charitable causes can be run as a one-off:

*We organise an annual Children in Need concert where offenders and staff perform (to varying standards!) musical routines for a paying audience of offenders' and staff families and other invited guests. Other events are held throughout the prison (raffles, sponsored events etc) during the week. Offenders are integral to the organisation and implementation of all the events. Around 20 offenders were involved this year in the concert and many more were involved in other activities (at least 100 and possibly more in some way).*

Roles in which the active citizen works on behalf of fellow prisoners generally require more time not only in training, but through the development of on-the-job experience. It is for this reason that roles like Listeners are protected by delaying transfers where possible. However, even these activities can be adapted to take account of turnover. Recruitment should include a period of shadowing a more experienced volunteer, so that there is continuity despite the turnover. Shadowing opportunities have been built into the recruitment and preparation of diversity reps at HMP Wandsworth.

Prison staff, together with their voluntary sector partners, can also build links that will provide a continuous experience for prisoners employed as active citizens. A prisoner who has begun an NVQ should be able to complete the same course at the next prison. Indeed, it could be argued that the decision about where the prisoner is transferred should consider prisons that provide the same training. Similarly, staff in receiving prisons could be better at recognising the work done at previous prisons, for example, by fast-tracking someone with experience as a peer mentor into a mentoring position (if the prisoner wishes to continue in the role).



Finally, the problem of turnover highlights another strong advantage of working closely with the voluntary sector, which has greater links with the local community. Many activities in prison are facilitated by voluntary organisations that can continue to work with the prisoner after release. In the context of a high turnover, this is perhaps most important for short-term sentenced prisoners.

The prisons responding to the survey demonstrate that creative responses to turnover can enhance schemes that nurture responsibility in prisoners. A crucial link is that greater consultation with prisoners who are likely to be transferred will help them to make the most of the volunteering opportunities available to them.

### **Supporting prisoners in volunteering**

Specific measures to support prisoners in their active citizenship roles should be built into the scheme's design. Helping prisoners to benefit from these opportunities takes three forms:

- training to develop skills
- supervision to maintain a quality service
- recognising their achievements.

### **Preparation and training**

There are many opportunities for active citizenship that require little or no training. In these cases, the prisoner gains from the chance to help others, or make amends.

Given the level of responsibility entailed by some roles, it is vital that prisons provide proper training. Too little training, perhaps resulting from budget restrictions, can leave the prisoner vulnerable, and undermine the quality of the service given to other prisoners.

Training enhances the quality of the contribution the prisoner can make as an active citizen, and it has long-term

implications for the prisoner's own rehabilitation. Some forms of active citizenship build on skills that are directly linked to the job market. PRT's active citizenship project included opportunities to work in media, through arts, prison newsletters, and radio stations. We visited the Media House at HMP Downview, a scheme in which women prisoners learn production of television and radio programming. Maria Esposito, Media House Manager, explained the training process:

*The course runs for five months. ... Students learn to produce programmes, taking on all roles writing, filming, editing etc. The broadcast unit produces programmes for 'TIME TV' which is broadcast throughout Downview. Final qualifications can lead to work in the media with outside organisations.*

A similar perspective was provided by Hughie Solomon, St Giles peer support worker manager at HMP Bullingdon. He explained the degree of training involved in the peer support scheme:

*The courses are six months in duration, and they normally take 8-10 prisoners per course. The first month of the training is class-room based, and the remaining months involve on-the-job training. By the time they've finished the course, they are pretty much job ready. This is why we insisted that prisoners must be allowed to make the phone calls, etc. They could do the NVQ without all the practical experience, but this would mean they wouldn't be so job ready. Even if they've gone into other kinds of jobs, it's evident that the training has instilled a great work ethic in them.*

### **Supervision of active citizens**

Voluntary organisations can make a significant contribution to active citizenship schemes by providing expert supervision.

This is even more important when the demands of the role call for high levels of responsibility. HMP Highdown's response to the PRT survey described an active citizenship scheme that employed prisoners as peer mentors for drug misusers, run by the CARATs workers with the support of the St Giles Trust:

*Peer supporters are offered weekly supervision and also have group supervision. They are given as much support as they want. They can do the Level 3 NVQ in Advice and Guidance (run by St Giles) – this is available to any supporter anywhere in the prison. Because St Giles run the training, this takes some of the pressure off the CARAT workers, who can then offer support in other ways.*

Listeners routinely respond to the needs of prisoners who are very distressed. Their role can be very stressful, and hence Listeners benefit from the specialised support that Samaritans can provide. Linda Pyatt, National Prison Co-ordinator at Samaritans, described the way that volunteers from the community go into prisons to advise and encourage Listeners:

*A huge amount of support is provided by Samaritans volunteers to the Listeners. The volunteers that go into the prisons are extremely committed to what they're doing – most are doing it on top of their normal duties as Samaritans.*

## 10. Milestones, outcomes, monitoring, equality

An important part of managing active citizenship is tracking its performance, in terms of the prisoners the programme reaches, equality of access to the opportunities, and the outcomes of the project.

Prisons should monitor a scheme's milestones and outputs simply to ensure that it is working well. However, an added advantage is that publicising the achievements of a scheme will help to promote it among discipline staff and prisoners. The support of staff is vital to make the scheme work; the prisoners need to be aware of the successes in order to attract their interest in taking part.

### Outcomes

Active citizenship schemes should include basic monitoring, such as the number of prisoners who participate, the hours they work, and clearly defined outputs of their work. Tracking the project in this way can establish its usefulness and reliability.

Monitoring volunteering and active citizenship can provide important evidence about changes in the prisoner's willingness to engage with the regime, skills development, and accomplishments. This information can balance more negative reports about the person's levels of risk. However, certain outcomes of active citizenship can be difficult to measure. Part One presented the impact of active citizenship in terms of feeling trusted, having a self image as a contributor to society, becoming a more responsible person. While these arguably have a profound influence on the person's decision to desist from crime, measuring such personal change can be very difficult.

More practically, such monitoring can require greater investment at a time of budget constraints. As one voluntary sector organisation explained:

*[This project] has been difficult for the prison to take on . . . There are battles over funding, and we have to show evidence that it contributes to reducing re-offending. I'm sure it does reduce re-offending. But this evidence thing is a nightmare – we don't have the resources to track the impact.*

Part of the answer is that prisons already monitor factors that can be linked (at least indirectly) with active citizenship, as explained by a prison governor:

*Citizenship can be promoted in very practical terms: less self harm, less disruption, better social order, better compliance with offending behaviour work. There is also a link between the sense of belonging that active citizenship fosters and better chances of resettlement: along with risk, we need a more positive measure of someone's productive roles.*

(HMP Grendon Prison Managers' Focus Group)

In one of the prisons visited as part of the study, the staff focus group stated that many prisoners decline to take part in offending behaviour programmes. As a consequence, the prison is limited in the evidence it can provide of any risk reduction over time. However, through their involvement in active citizenship, including roles of Listener or Insider, peer mentor, or carer, the prisoner might be able to show positive developments during their time in custody.

Voluntary sector partners can contribute to this process, when they have been working with an individual over a period of time. Linda Pyatt, Samaritans National Prison Co-ordinator described the impact of the Listener role, which in many cases, increased the prisoner's self-confidence. She explained that in their role of providing support to Listeners, "Samaritans are able to see them grow as people through the process".

By working closely with the voluntary sector partners, prisons can identify the evidence it already collects, as well as the gaps in data, relevant to the specific active citizenship project. In addition, prisons and their voluntary sector partners should exploit the full range of available evidence, acknowledging that sometimes personal narratives or other qualitative data is the best available source of information about the effectiveness of the scheme.

### **Equality of access**

Considering its benefits, active citizenship can be seen as one of the most important ways that prisons can reduce institutionalisation and dependency by enabling prisoners to exercise responsibility. However, from the perspective of a prison regime, active citizenship is likely to be defined as a privilege, to be granted only to those who demonstrate their reliability and suitability. The danger is that participation in active citizenship will be extended to groups that already enjoy advantages, and denied to other groups in a discriminatory way. Prisons need to monitor their active citizenship schemes to ensure that they practise equality, particularly in terms of equal access and specialist support.

The Prison Service Order on 'Working with the voluntary sector' has a section on encouraging and welcoming diversity. This requires prison governors to:

*explore ways of building and developing contacts with groups currently under-represented as a means of increasing diversity and being able to help meet the needs of minority groups and specialist needs. address attitudes in establishments, which would be off putting to staff and volunteers from these organisations through training and policy implementation.*

(HM Prison Service, 2002)

The positive duty placed on all prisons to promote equality implies that prisons should be pro-active in recruiting prisoners who would otherwise be reluctant, or unable, to put themselves forward. So, for example, expecting prisoners who wish to serve as an Insider to fill out an application will prevent many prisoners from undertaking the role. They might hold foreign nationality and need translation to be made aware of the opportunity. Or they might have a learning disability, such as dyslexia. In any case, in managing a scheme, including publicity and recruitment, prisons should always take into account problems with literacy and language in order to ensure equality of access.

Single equality means that protection from discrimination, and the positive duty to promote diversity, are extended to encompass all protected groups. To ensure that those with disabilities are not discriminated against, prisons and their voluntary sector partners should provide support, where it is needed, to enable prisoners with disabilities to perform active citizenship roles. For example, a learning disabled prisoner might be unable to contribute to a prisoner council unless support is provided such as help with reading council documents or speaking to the council. Often, the required support could be provided by another prisoner, thereby resolving the problem through other active citizens.



## **Recognition of prisoners' achievements**

Nigel Atkinson, then Deputy Governor at HMP Bullingdon, stated:

*I look for ways that we can give credit to people. To make someone a workshop foreman is a big thing for someone who has little previous sense of worth outside.*

Rewarding participation requires careful consideration and consultation with the voluntary sector where they are involved. However, publicising the prisoners' achievements is one way of registering the outcomes of a project. The PRT survey found that most prisons had some means of publicising achievements, and the respondents cited a wide variety of methods. This sometimes occurred in an unplanned, haphazard fashion. The main methods for publicising active citizenship achievements can be summarised briefly:

- posters
- prison newsletter
- awards ceremony
- certificates
- notices on the prison radio.

## **Costs**

The Prison Reform Trust's survey of prison staff and managers asked whether they feared that budget savings would require cut backs on active citizenship programmes. Of the 70 prison staff who provided their views on the possible impact of budget cuts in 2009, about one-third said that budget savings would have some effect; and a similar number said they would have no effect.

About half of those who said that budget cuts would have an impact said that the effects would be slight:

*This being one of the core functions of a resettlement prison, budget savings have not impacted*

*significantly, i.e., there are few, if any, financial obligations between the prison and the placement, the main costs being officer time, transport, etc. which is built into our regime.*

*It has prevented expanding in some areas due to staff not being available to supervise and support.*

Others suggested that savings had resulted in serious cutbacks in active citizenship activities:

*Time out of cell has been cut back since introduction of core day. Lack of funds to pay voluntary organisations' expenses.*

*Budgetary restrictions can impact upon staffing levels and in turn the opportunities for progressing these matters.*

*I would like to promote this type of work. However, the potential for this is limited within the budget constraints.*

However, in just as many prisons, the respondent felt that budget savings would not affect the schemes:

*None, we just have to be more creative and look to third sector organisations for possible solutions.*

*None - the problem lies with how a prison facilitates these schemes - though more money helps.*

There is a good explanation for the cost effectiveness of expanding active citizenship: it reduces the demands on some of the more costly aspects of running prisons. A deputy governor interviewed in prison commented:

*It's about creating the opportunities so people can feel valued and can benefit from that. It's about treating*

*them as individuals and as people. Managing them that way reduces the conflict and improves the atmosphere. That benefits the establishment, because you're working with your population rather than against them.*

Active citizenship should form an important component in making prisons places of productive activity. The survey response from one prison explained:

*This establishment continues to look for opportunities to expand the involvement of the offender population in all aspects of life. Peer involvement, the work of orderlies in a variety of roles and the work of volunteer offenders enhances what we do and allows us to do much more than we could do otherwise.*

# 11. Conclusion and Recommendations

*Prisons should not be about turning offenders into good prisoners, but about turning prisoners into good citizens.*

## Conclusion

*Time Well Spent* gathered evidence about the extent to which active citizenship schemes were accessible in prisons, the impact they have, and the practical steps that prisons and their voluntary sector partners take to make these schemes as efficient and effective as possible.

The study found that, through active citizenship, people in prison experience:

- a purpose to their time in prison
- a chance to acquire new skills
- earning the trust of others
- an increased capacity for responsibility
- a chance to give something back
- a route from passive recipient to
- a contributor to society.

The first half of this report presented evidence that active citizenship benefits prisons, as prisoners provide crucial services within the prison. It benefits people in prison, as they gain opportunities to work in meaningful activities. These opportunities contribute to the social and emotional development of prisoners and prepare them for reintegration into wider society. Thus, local communities will gain from active citizenship schemes which help those who have been in custody to resettlement and to desist from offending. Further, as the evidence gathered for this report shows, active citizenship tends to evoke voluntary compliance with the

regime and a commitment to make a positive contribution to the prison community.

The projects reviewed as part of this study demonstrate that prison does not have to be a pointless and idle experience. Some prisons are extremely effective in running schemes that enlist the efforts of prisoners in activities that benefit society. Voluntary activities are consistent with a work regime, in that the hours spent in the roles are working hours, during which the prisoners are exercising responsibility, being accountable for their time, and engaged in productive activity.

Many of the values central to active citizenship reflect and build on those of the decency agenda, which is already well-established across the secure estate. Promoting active citizenship enables the Prison Service to fulfil the duties contained in its mission statement:

*Her Majesty's Prison Service serves the public by keeping in custody those committed by the courts. Its duty is to look after them with humanity and help them lead law-abiding and useful lives in custody and after release.*

(HM Prison Service website)

The values also match the principles of the rehabilitation revolution set out by the Coalition government, which aims to strengthen efforts to tackle re-offending by making as much use as possible of expertise and innovation within the voluntary and community sector.<sup>17</sup> They are consistent too with the principles of the 'Big Society' and its emphasis on volunteering and active citizenship.

Yet, today, prisons in England and Wales provide limited opportunities for people in prison to become active citizens. While someone is in prison, serving a sentence, society should be able to benefit directly from work that the prisoner can do. The government's plans to turn prisons into places of work can only succeed if prisons continue to develop, expand on, and sustain active citizenship by prisoners through partnership with the voluntary sector.

The role of voluntary organisations is crucial. They need to be part of the team, within the prison, who can bring a diversity of skills and expertise to resolve problems that arise as the scheme develops. The project found, however, that the voluntary sector is under-used and stifled in many prisons, and the contribution that they can make is often under-valued.

There is a disparity between the capacity of voluntary sector agencies to contribute to prisoners' wellbeing and the level of activity which prisons currently allow. Further development requires strong support and leadership from senior managers and policy-makers who recognise its value. To promote the rehabilitation revolution, prisons must place greater emphasis on providing opportunities inside, where the risks can be assessed, monitored, and – to some extent – controlled.

Volunteering also enables prisons to make full use of a very important resource which is otherwise largely wasted: namely, the prisoners themselves. The pressure to reduce costs may, therefore, encourage greater use of volunteering and active citizenship. A shift in thinking, seeing prisoners as people with resources that can be put to good use, should encourage prisons to expand on active citizenship schemes.

## **Recommendations**

### **Government should:**

- Acknowledge the contribution that volunteering and active citizenship must play in rehabilitation, developing work in prison and the wider concept of the 'Big Society'.
- Examine what needs to be done to promote volunteering and active citizenship in prisons, including greater engagement with the local community.
- Commission research to explore how the outcomes of active citizenship can promote desistance from crime.
- Encourage the Parole Board, and those responsible for sentence management and risk assessment, to take account of prisoners' contributions as active citizens.

### **HM Prison Service should:**

- Expand opportunities for active citizenship.
- Involve voluntary sector organisations, more intensely in delivery of active citizenship and volunteering.
- Develop and implement standards of active citizenship, to include:
  - encouragement to prisons to expand on opportunities provided
  - monitoring of equality of access
  - checks against providing volunteering opportunities selectively, only to those most able prisoners
  - checks to ensure that voluntary

- work provided is meaningful and not exploitative
- checks to ensure that these roles do not impose undue risk to the personal safety or welfare of the prisoners involved
- prisoners are not being expected to do jobs that staff should be paid to do
- pay structures do not discourage participation in active citizenship.
- Reduce the extent to which security concerns inhibit active citizenship by identifying and managing, rather than avoiding, risks.
- Use monitoring to ensure that active citizenship is equally accessible to protected groups, including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups and people who have a learning disability.
- Require establishments to have fully functioning prison councils or forums. The instruction to do so should contain specific advice about how this can be done in prisons with a high population turnover.

#### **Prisons should:**

- Do more to engage uniformed staff. In particular, involve wing officers in the development of volunteering and active citizenship:
  - inviting their ideas
  - including them in project design
  - communicating with them about the projects' aims, requirements, and outputs
  - responding to their concerns by involving them in problem-solving.

- Analyse their policies to identify ways in which they inhibit the exercise of responsibility by prisoners, and revise the policies as required.
- Implement systematically the sharing of positive information about prisoners – about their strengths, interests and skills. All staff who work in prisons – on the wings, but also healthcare, workshops, education, and the gym – are well-placed to observe individuals who would be suitable for specific roles, such as Listeners, race reps, peer mentors, Insiders, or disability reps.
- Ensure that prisoners' contributions are recognised, and where possible, that qualifications are awarded for involvement.
- Use needs assessments to identify areas in the prison that could benefit from greater prisoner involvement.

Look specifically at possibilities for active citizenship in:

- training and education
- equality and diversity
- resettlement
- safer custody
- arts and media
- learning disabilities
- caring for older prisoners.
- Employ a range of methods to tackle any problems caused by a high turnover of prisoners. Examples include: short duration courses; continuity with outside through the voluntary sector; holding back those in particular



courses; continuity with outside through the voluntary sector; holding back those in particular roles; and job shadowing.

- Explore the scope for expanding representative roles open to prisoners, such as enhancing the roles of violence reduction reps, diversity reps, disability reps, and others.
- Explore possibilities for greater partnership with voluntary organisations, particularly in expanding volunteering and active citizenship schemes.
- Ensure that active citizenship is not discouraged through the pay structure. Prisons should consider providing an allowance to set against any loss of earned income due to voluntary activities.
- Find ways of making active citizenship roles accessible to all prisoners: not just those who are the most obvious candidates in terms of competence or reliability.

#### Active citizenship schemes should:

- Incorporate outcome measures into the design of every active citizenship scheme.
- Measures of the impact of active citizenship should include indicators of:
  - quality of life (improvements in the participant's quality of life)
  - an increased sense of citizenship in participants, evidence of an enhanced sense of belonging
  - changes of attitude and values, for example increased empathy acquired skills
  - impact on vulnerable prisoners in supporting their participation in active citizenship.
- Develop ideas about how to tie volunteering and active citizenship into preparation for resettlement and support post-release, so that participation contributes to better resettlement outcomes.

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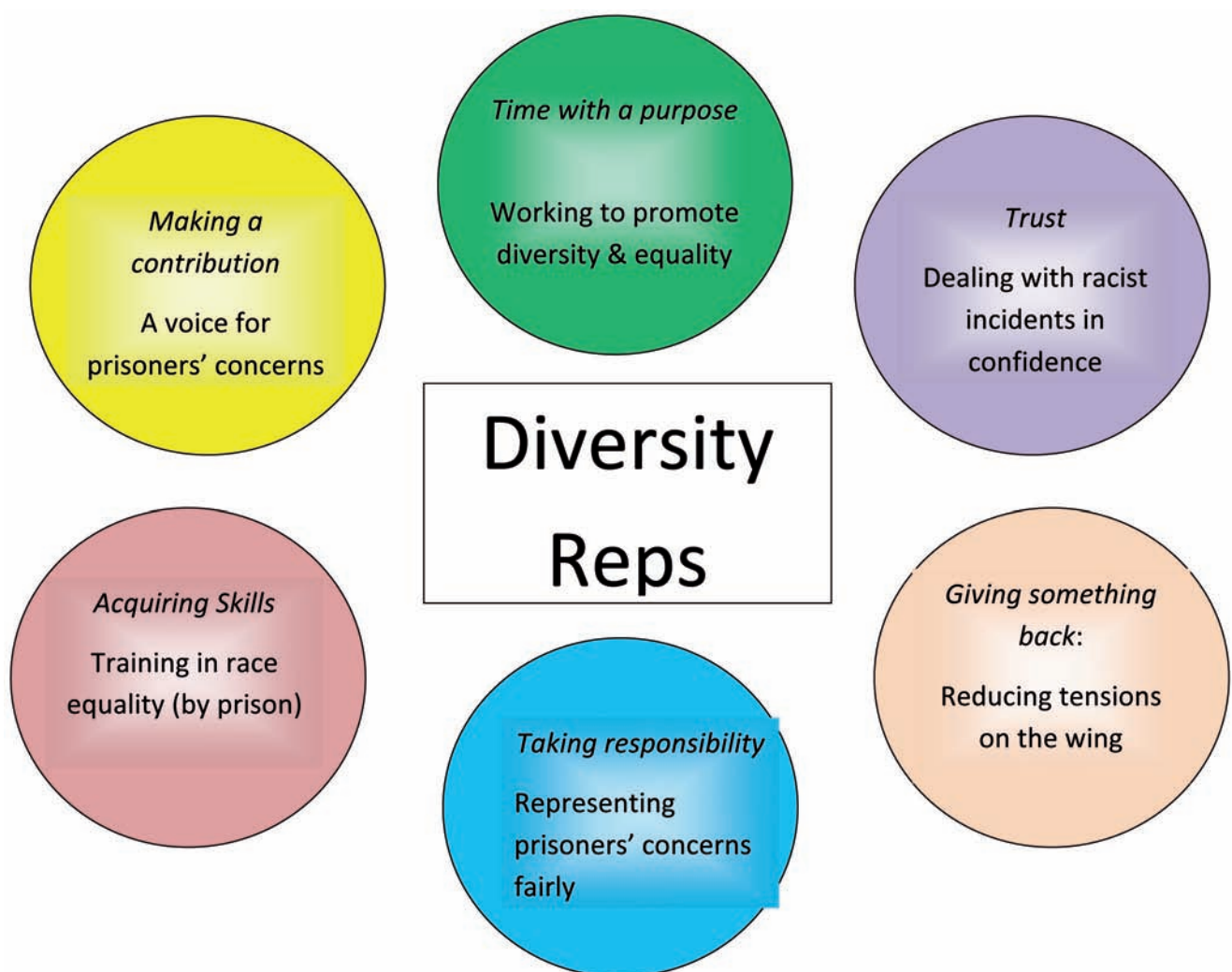
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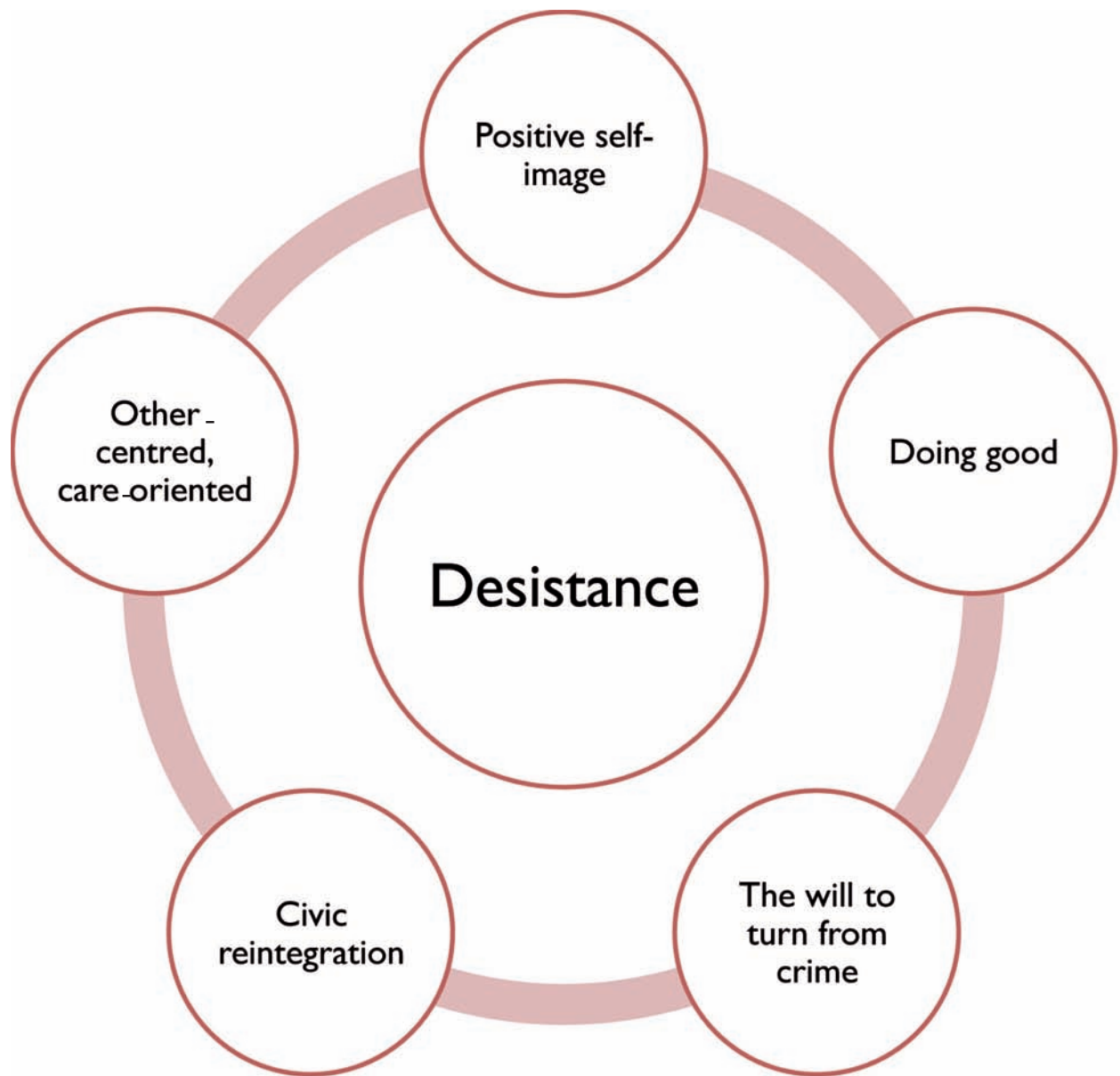
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## ***Fieldwork outputs***

141 prisons surveyed

82 responses (plus one immigration detention centre)

58% response rate

12 prisons visited:

Bullington, Cardiff, Downview, Elmley, Gloucester, Grendon, Hewell, Highdown, Portland, Stanford Hill, Swaleside, Thorn Cross

Interviews (total number)

Governors and Prison Service Managers	19
Prison Officers	11
Voluntary Sector Providers	9
Prisoners	48
Others	1

Focus Group Participants (total number)

Governors and Prison Service Managers	27
Prison Officers	21
Voluntary Sector Providers	5
Prisoners	135

# Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.citizen.org.uk/Democracy/pdf/2.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Volunteering is a recurring theme in policy statements of the coalition government. For example, it is central to the concept of the 'Big Society' which has been outlined by the Prime Minister.

<sup>3</sup> A Centre for Social Justice report argues that, in prison, "jobs" are often an exercise in make-believe work at levels so low that they are indistinguishable from inertia' (2009: 188).

<sup>4</sup> See Boyce, Hunter and Hough (2009).

<sup>5</sup> See Burnett and Maruna (2004) for a report on the scheme's evaluation.

<sup>6</sup> Victim Support Wales described their role in the SORI programme in written testimony to the Welsh Affairs Select Committee (see Victim Support Wales, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.uservoice.org>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.finecellwork.co.uk/>

<sup>9</sup> 'Between September 2006 and August 2007, only 16% of prisoners surveyed reported being unlocked for 10 or more hours on an average weekday; when open prisons were excluded, this dropped to 13%' (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2008: 8).

<sup>10</sup> See also Sampson and Laub (2005) and Farrall and Calverley (2006), among others, for more on desistance and identity change.

<sup>11</sup> See also Maruna and LeBel (2003); Maruna (2001); Ward and Maruna (2007).

<sup>12</sup> Adult offenders released from custody in the first quarter of 2008 had a one-year proven re-offending rate of 40% (Ministry of Justice, 2010b).

<sup>13</sup> It is stated on the Samaritans website that "the policy of confidentiality for Listeners is exactly the same as for Samaritans volunteers. This is vital in encouraging prisoners at risk of taking their own life to use the service"

([http://www.samaritans.org/your\\_emotional\\_health/our\\_work\\_in\\_prisons/the\\_listener\\_scheme.aspx](http://www.samaritans.org/your_emotional_health/our_work_in_prisons/the_listener_scheme.aspx)). Prison Service Order 2700, paragraph 7.2.9 states: "The principle of total confidentiality is central to the work of Samaritans and this applies equally to their work in prisons, including that of prisoner Listeners" (HM Prison Service 2007).

<sup>14</sup> The new safeguarding regulations, now under review, would have placed tighter restrictions on people with criminal convictions who wish to work with children or vulnerable adults. They would have extended the exceptions to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (under which less serious convictions are considered 'spent', and thus do not need to be disclosed to employers, after a specified period of time), such that an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check would be required for anyone working in a 'regulated activity' - that is, an activity involving frequent or intensive contact with children or vulnerable adults. Under Coalition government plans to remodel the Vetting and Barring Scheme, its registration stage (under which registration with the Independent Safeguarding Authority was to be required, from November 2010, for those engaged in regulated activities) is currently on hold.

<sup>15</sup> P. Gabriel, 'D.I.Y.', Universal Distribution, 1978.

<sup>16</sup> Centre for Social Justice (2009)

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Ministry of Justice (2010c). See also the Conservative Party's Green Paper *Prisons with a Purpose* (2008).



*It helps you for the outside world, if you are given responsibility. They give you responsibility in here. No one is giving up on you. Some of us, no one has given them responsibility before.*

Prisons have a duty to turn people out less likely to re-offend than when they went in. Encouraging people to desist from crime is challenging work, but engaging people in helping others is one of the most effective ways to make sure that a prison sentence can become time well spent rather than time wasted.

This report builds on evidence from a survey of prisons across England and Wales and visits to active citizenship schemes. It shows that volunteering opportunities enable prisoners to exercise responsibility and make a contribution to society. It profiles good practice and provides prison staff with practical guidelines about how to make active citizenship work, including how to manage any risks involved.

£10

ISBN 978-0946209898 -7



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